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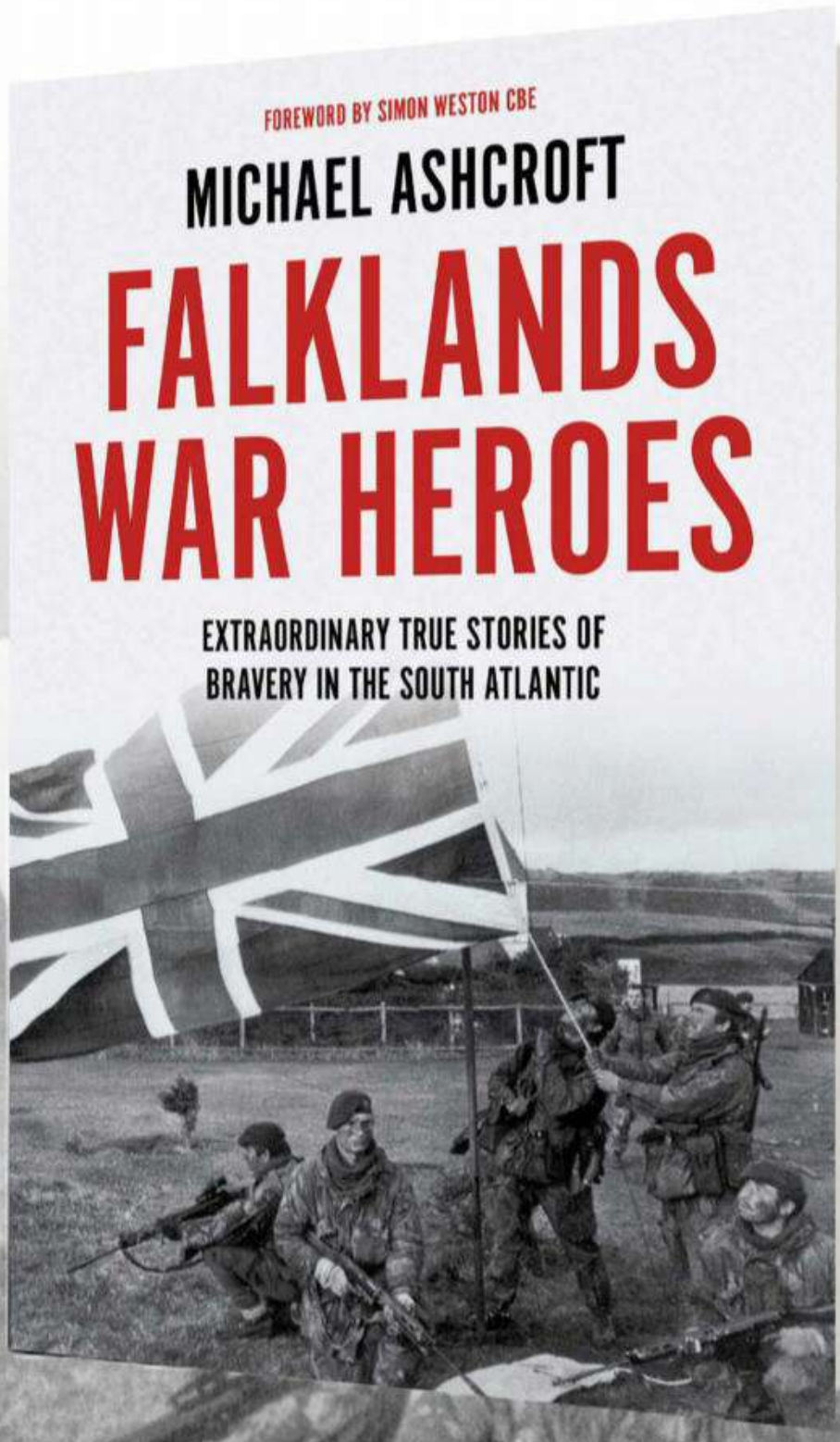
FOREWORD BY SIMON WESTON CBE
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WELCOME CHRISTMAS 2021

The refectory of Cleeve Abbey, Somerset, as it may have looked during the 13th century. Turn to page 28 to learn more about faith and worship during the Middle Ages

Life in the Middle Ages revolved around the Church, with its many feast days and rituals shaping the calendar. The parish church was at the heart of the community, a place of worship and social activity, while soaring cathedrals, holy shrines and religious houses formed a backdrop to daily life. In this month's Essential Guide, **aided by expert Professor Nicholas Orme, we explore the vast reach of the medieval Church in England** – from a 'how to' guide for pilgrims on the road, to the religious ceremonies that marked important moments in an individual's life. Turn to page 28 to get started.

Elsewhere, we take a look at the remarkable story of Ewan Forbes, **the transgender man whose fight for his family's baronetcy in the 1960s would have a profound impact on transgender rights** for decades to come (*page 59*).

Also in this issue, we launch our new art history series, which investigates the secrets hidden within the brushstrokes of some of the world's most famous paintings. **We begin on page 64 with Jan van Eyck's 15th-century masterpiece *The Arnolfini Portrait*.**

Plus, 80 years after the devastating Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, we examine what really happened on that fateful day (*page 16*), and **discover how Britain might have looked had Edward VIII not abdicated in 1936** (*page 70*). We've also announced the 10 winners of our recent children's history competition - turn to page 66 to view the successful entries.

Happy Christmas!

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

THIS MONTH'S BIG NUMBERS

30
The amount of fabric, in inches, that Louis Réard used to make his daring 1946 invention: the bikini

8
The number of religious services that a medieval Benedictine monk would attend each day

17
The number of submarines that the Soviet Union 'paid' to soft drinks giant Pepsi in the 1980s

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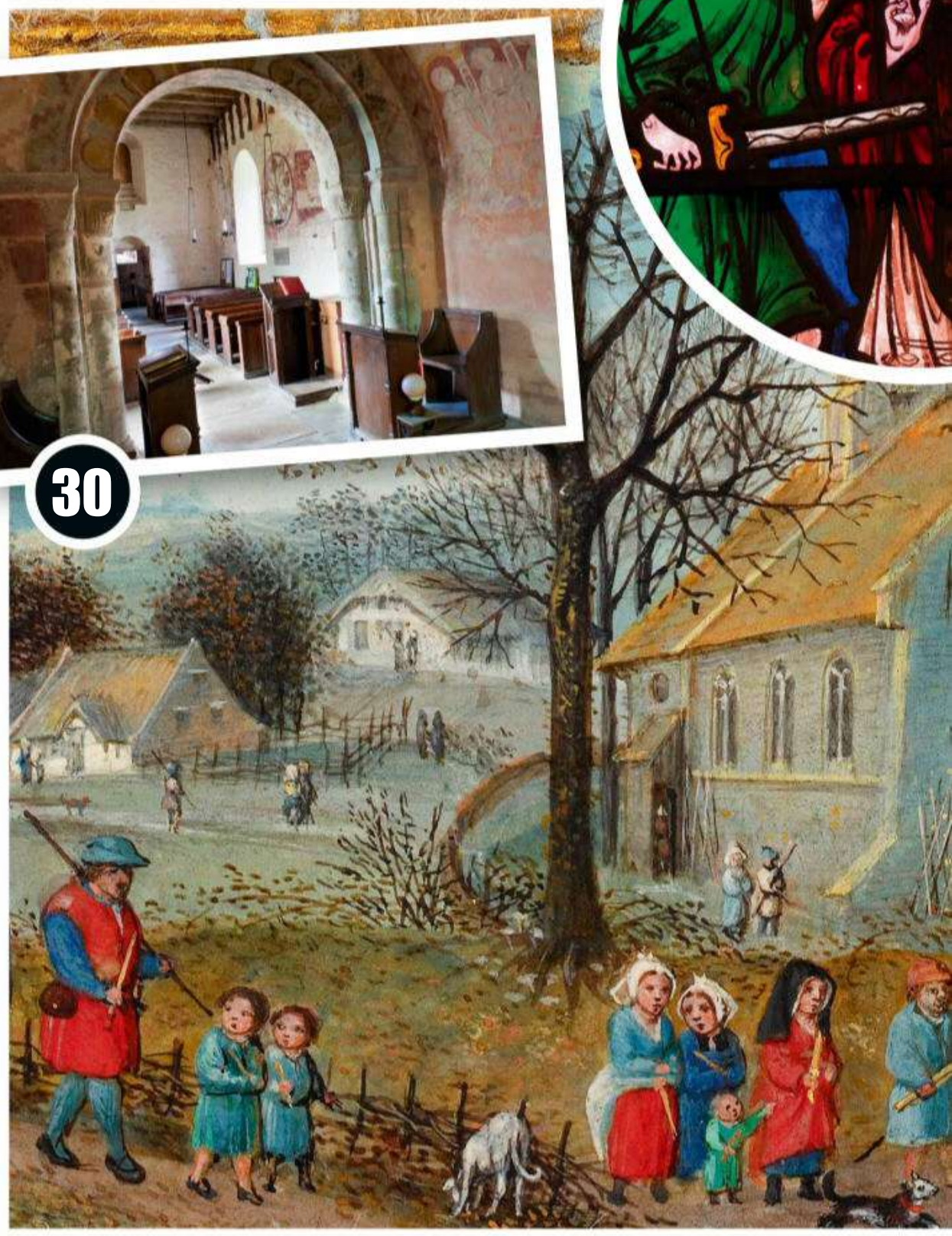

▲ Find out what it was like to attend church during the Middle Ages: from the services, to the social opportunities it provided

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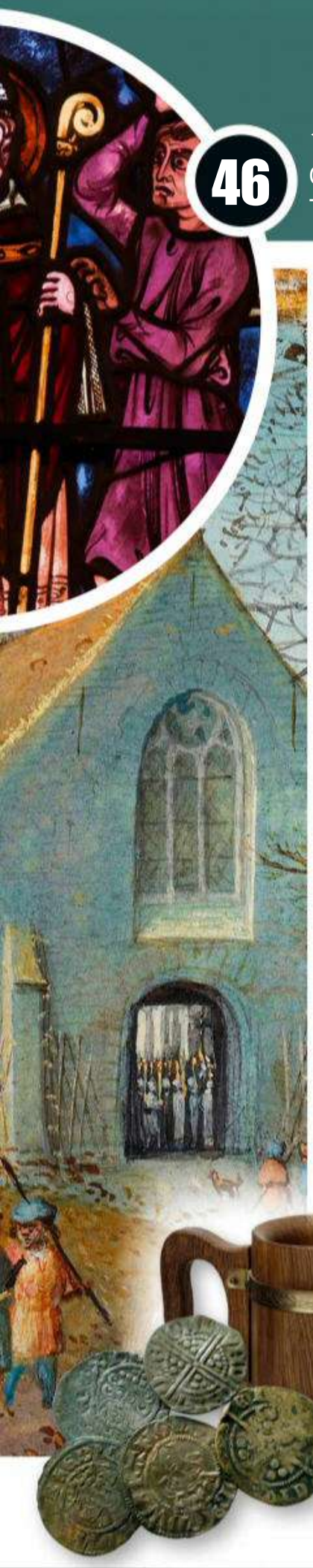
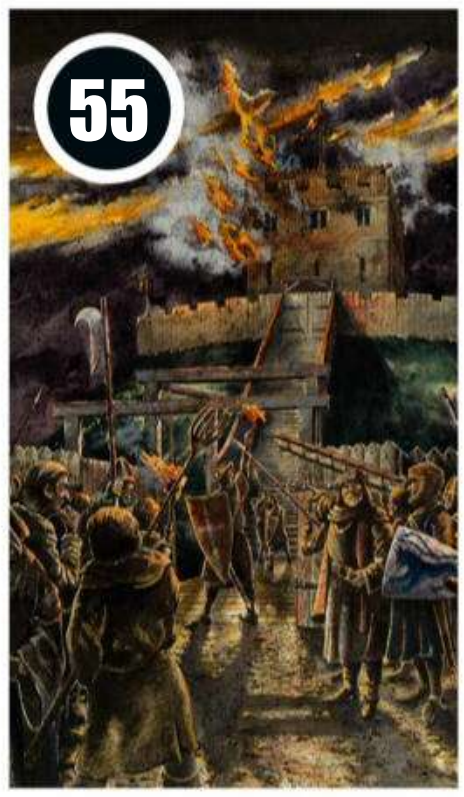


◀ Discover the secrets found within the walls of Canterbury Cathedral – and the story behind Thomas Becket's brutal murder there in 1170

▲ Demons and disease: deciphering church graffiti



▲ Inside the fate that befell those found guilty of heresy

▲ Why going on pilgrimage could also be an adventure

▲ What was it like to get married in medieval England?

▲ Have you – or a younger family member – won our festive contest?

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SNAPSHOTS

c1920
THE MERRY WIVES

A flock of happy couples make the most of the festive season by getting married in the same London church on Christmas Day. (The grooms are doing their best to be seen over the brides' veils.) While the notion of tying the knot on Noël has all but disappeared, Christmas weddings were a popular sight from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. This was not to add seasonal cheer to proceedings, but because churches traditionally offered weddings on 25 December free of charge, or at least at a lower cost. What's more, for working-class couples, this was one of the only days of the year that they were guaranteed to get off work.

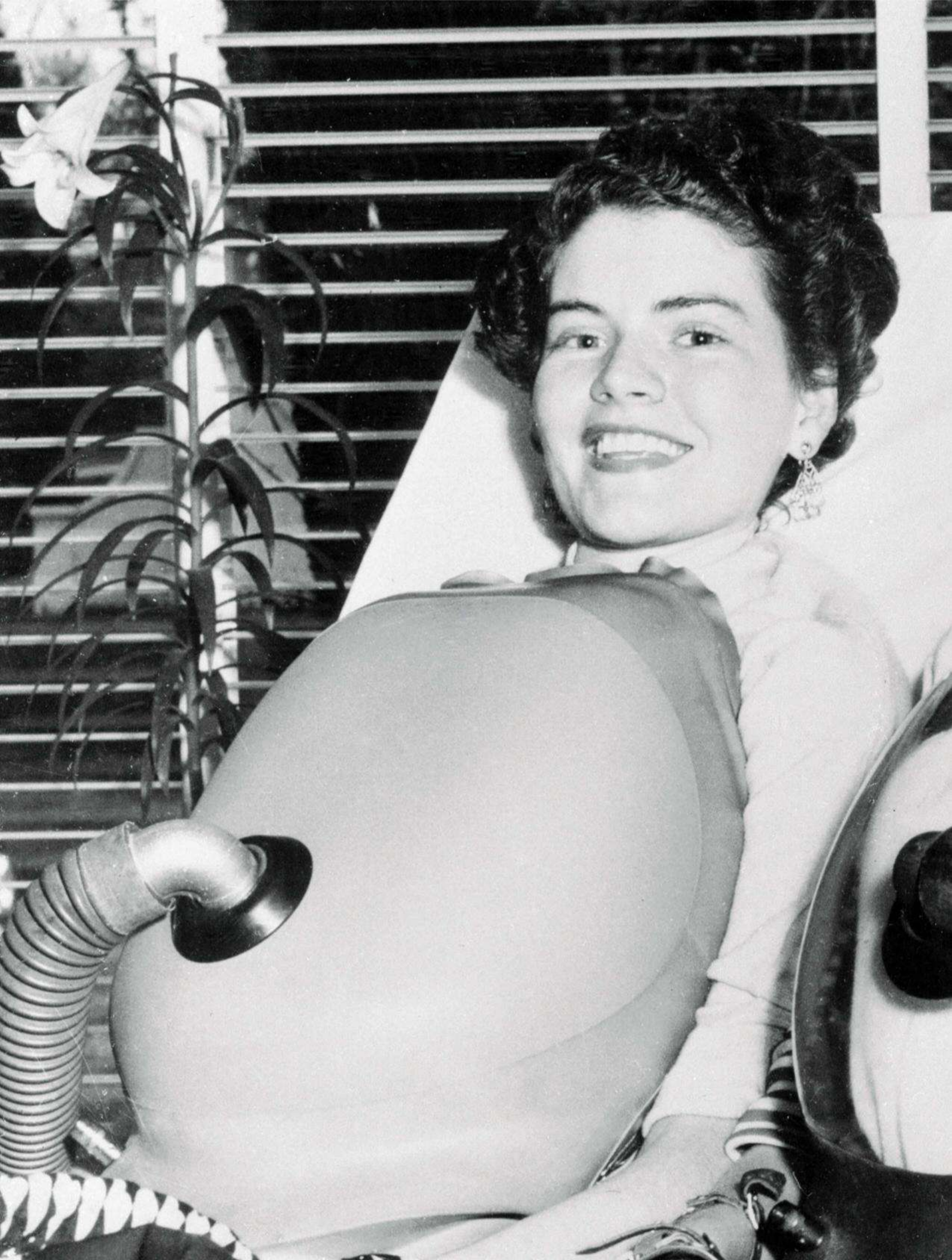
GETTY IMAGES

SNAPSHOTS

1954
SEEING THE SIGHTS

Five chiefs from Tanganyika, East Africa (now part of modern-day Tanzania) enjoy a close encounter with an elephant during a visit to London Zoo. The men – Leukuti Sefania Sumley Mollel of Arusha; Sylvanus Kaaya of the Meru; Amri Dodo of the Gorowa; Sabu, Sultan of Mluguru; and Liwali Paul Norbert of Mtama (*left to right*) – had travelled to the United Kingdom to learn about the country's approaches to local government, social services and agriculture, but were still able to fit in some fun activities, as this photograph shows. Interestingly, the female Indian elephant seen here was something of a 1950s celebrity. Named 'Dumbo', she had been transported to England by aeroplane, making her the first elephant to experience air travel.

GETTY IMAGES



SNAPSHOTS

1955
LIFE SAVERS

Thanks to the arrival of mass vaccination programmes in the 1950s, polio – a terrifying disease that targets children and causes paralysis – has been almost completely eradicated worldwide.
One historic method for treating polio was the 'iron lung', a type of ventilator that encased the body and, by changing the pressure inside, simulated breathing for those whose chest muscles were paralysed. However, patients could be stuck in the large metal boxes for weeks, even months, at a time. These two friends from Ohio, US, are recovering with help from a different device, which allows them to stay out of an iron lung and stay smiling. They are pictured on a special rocking bed, designed to move air in and out of the lungs by using gravity.

GETTY IMAGES

THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH...

RECENT HISTORY HEADLINES THAT CAUGHT OUR EYE

The knife and fork is replaced with a brush and vacuum cleaner to restore the 79-year-old cake

WWII-ERA CAKE DISCOVERED IN GERMANY

An almost completely intact, if squashed, cake, which survived a bombing raid during World War II, has been discovered in a cellar in the German city of Lübeck. The blackened hazelnut and almond dessert has kept its shape – with the curls of the icing on top still visible – and remains in the original wax wrapping. That is quite the culinary find, given that the cake was baked 79 years ago and burned in the attack. In March 1942, Lübeck suffered a devastating British bombing raid, which created a firestorm that destroyed much of the historic city, in retaliation for the 1940 Luftwaffe raid on Coventry. Work is now underway to preserve the cake – albeit for display, not eating.

LEFT: **Manfred Schneider, head of Lübeck's archaeology department, and fellow researcher Doris Mührenberg with the overcooked cake**

BELOW: **Baked during World War II, the nut-filled dessert has kept its shape**

ALAMY X5, IAN GLATT, JAMES FRASER AND CHRIS COBB, GETTY

SOPHISTICATED MUMMIFICATIONS CARRIED OUT 1,000 YEARS EARLIER THAN ASSUMED

New revelations regarding the remains of an ancient Egyptian nobleman could rewrite our knowledge of mummification, say experts. Analysis of Khuwy, who died during the Fifth Dynasty (c25th to the mid-24th century BC), has indicated that he was preserved in fine linen and resin – materials not thought to have been introduced for another 1,000 years. Professor Salima Ikram, head of Egyptology at Cairo's American University, told the *Observer* that "All books about mummification and the history of the Old Kingdom will need to be revised."

BABYLONIAN TABLET SHOWS THE WORLD'S OLDEST GHOST SIGHTING

The world's oldest-known depiction of a ghost has been discovered lurking inside a vault at the British Museum. Scratched onto the surface of a Babylonian clay tablet, the image – thought to be 3,500 years old – shows a bearded figure being led into the afterlife as part of a guide to exorcising spirits. The accompanying text, which is only visible from a particular angle, ends with a stark warning: "Do not look behind you!"

WWII 'GHOST SHIPS' RAISED FROM THE SEA DURING VOLCANIC ERUPTION

Activity from an underwater volcano near Japan's Ogasawara Islands has raised 24 World War II ships from the seabed. The transport vessels, captured by US forces during the battle of Iwo Jima in 1945, had been intentionally scuttled at the end of the clash to create a makeshift port for troops. However, due to the ongoing eruption of Fukutoku-Okanoba, the ships have now been brought to the surface on an island of pumice and ash. It's likely, though, that the new island will eventually collapse and the 'ghost ships' will be submerged once again.

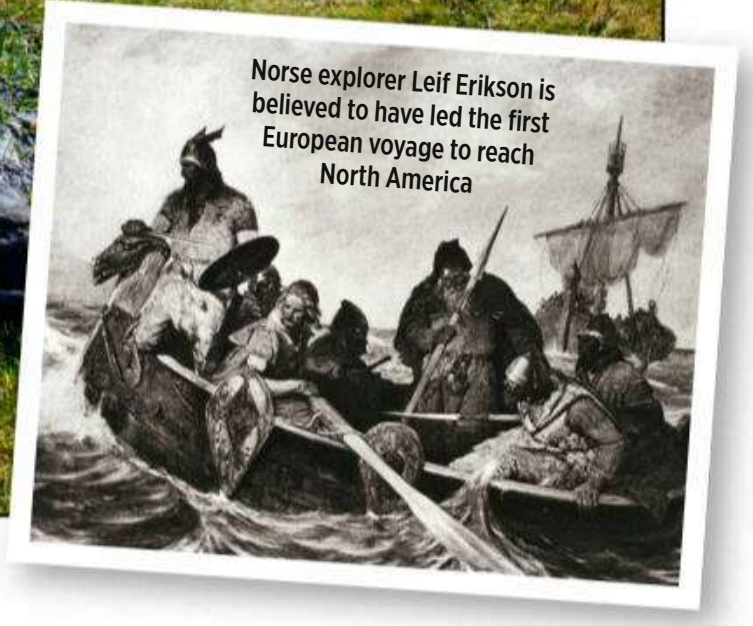
£200,000

The estimated sale price of a rare New England shilling found in Northumberland, which was struck in 1652 and used by settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony

SOLAR STORM HELPS CALCULATE DATE VIKINGS SETTLED IN NORTH AMERICA

Analysis of tree rings has shed new light on the arrival of the Vikings in North America. Although historians have long known that Norse settlers reached the New World before Christopher Columbus, the date has remained a mystery. However, experts have now confirmed that logs discovered at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, were felled in AD 1021 using tools associated with the Vikings, rather than native inhabitants. The researchers were aided by radiation damage within the tree rings, caused by a solar storm that took place in AD 993.

The L'Anse aux Meadows archaeological site in Newfoundland, Canada, is the only verified Norse settlement in North America



Norse explorer Leif Erikson is believed to have led the first European voyage to reach North America

LEFT: **A silk satin coat with black chiffon lining, dated c1940 – one of the many luxurious items found in Killerton's fashion collection**

RIGHT: **A blue taffeta evening dress dating from the 1820s. All items on public display are placed on a special mount to ensure they are properly 'supported'**

ABOVE LEFT: **Pauline Joran – the American-born soprano and mother of Paulise de Bush, who donated her extensive fashion collection to Killerton in the 1970s**

ABOVE RIGHT: **A patchwork and appliqué coverlet from the early 19th century. It depicts fashion items associated with young women of the period, such as bonnets and fans**

RIGHT: **Swimwear on display in Killerton's current exhibition, Active Minds and Busy Bodies, which opened shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic. A new display is planned for 2023**

NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES, MALCOLM JARVIS X4, WENDY ALDIS

Costume curator

Shelley Tobin

HOW DID YOU BECOME A COSTUME CURATOR FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST?
I held several positions at local authority museums before I joined the National Trust. This included a job at the Fashion Museum in Bath (one of my first paid roles, nearly 40 years ago!), followed by working with the fashion collections at The Royal Pavilion, Art Gallery & Museums in Brighton.

After working in Brighton for seven years, I saw that the National Trust was advertising for the position of costume curator at the 18th century Killerton House in Devon. I was keen to go back to university and do an MA in the History of Textiles and Dress, so I took up the post part time in conjunction with my studies. I still work part time for the Trust, in tandem with my role as assistant curator at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. I love being able to keep one foot in a local authority museum, while also working at a lovely place like Killerton. It's the best of both worlds.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?
Pre pandemic, much of my time was spent preparing Killerton's annual fashion exhibition, which mostly draws from the 20,000 plus objects we have stored here. Starting out with items gathered by Paulise de Bush an enthusiastic collector of both theatrical and historical costumes it is the largest dress collection owned by the National Trust and has grown considerably over the years.

Although I am now planning a new exhibition for 2023, I am also working on the digital face of our collection: writing for our website and preparing items for social media. On top of this, I am producing articles that will inform our volunteers about the collection, so that they can share its stories with visitors.

WHAT DOES YOUR CURATORIAL WORK INVOLVE?
Curatorial work usually involves collections management: researching, recording and auditing objects, and preventive conservation making sure they are properly packed and stored. I commission conservation treatment for objects, which is a really important part of caring for the collection.

Doing this makes it easier for us to ensure the items are accessible to all not just for the visitors who come to Killerton in person, but those who visit our public facing database. For example, I recently worked through a large collection of shoes mostly from the wardrobe of one individual in order to enhance our records. Many of our pieces have great stories to tell, so hopefully we can excite and inspire people about the collection and our work.

"There are so many wonderful pieces – gorgeous, luxurious and representative of great skill"

WHAT COSTUMES DOES THE COLLECTION HAVE?
The collection at Killerton concentrates on Western European fashionable dress and accessories, along with examples of textiles, patterns, needlework tools and equipment. The clothing for men, women and children mostly represents typical dress for day, evening and special occasions from the 18th century to the mid 1970s, but we also have some occupational clothing, such as agricultural workers' smocks and nurses' uniforms.

In terms of strengths, the collection features some excellent examples of 19th and early 20th century dress, as well as important 18th century silks and mid 20th century ready-to-wear and designer clothing.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ITEM?
There are so many wonderful pieces. Some are gorgeous, luxurious and representative of great skill, while others are less beautiful, but with amazing stories to tell. One of my favourite items is a patchwork and appliqué coverlet made in 1810, depicting objects that would have surrounded the (probably) young makers in their everyday lives: shoes, bonnets, fans, needlework tools and a 'Game of Geography'. It very much reflects a girl's education at that time.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE EXHIBITION TO CURATE?
I'm a *Strictly Come Dancing* fan, so Shall We Dance an exhibition of some of our more glamorous ballgowns and evening dress has to be one of my favourites. I also enjoyed planning our 2018 displays celebrating women's suffrage, as well as our more recent exhibition, Tree of Life, which not only enabled us to explore designs inspired by trees, but also to demonstrate how trees, wood and their products have been used to make clothing. For the latter, we displayed a selection of items for visitors to handle. It was great to reveal that all of the had been made from tree bark or wood pulp.

HOW ARE THE COSTUMES PRESERVED?
When funds allow, objects are treated by a professional textile conservator. My colleague Charlotte ensures that each item is meticulously condition checked before going on public view, with a special mount prepared to display it. This not only ensures the item is properly supported, but that it shows the correct period shape.

Preventive conservation is an important part of our work. This includes monitoring for insects such as moths and carpet beetles, which can damage objects both in storage and on display. A basic knowledge of entomology can be a useful curatorial skill!

SHELLEY TOBIN is a costume curator at the National Trust, based at Killerton, Devon. For more information about Killerton's fashion collection, visit *nationaltrust.org.uk/killerton/the-fashion-collection*

Complements the BBC Radio 3 series *The Essay: Our Fathers' War*

The attack on Pearl Harbor

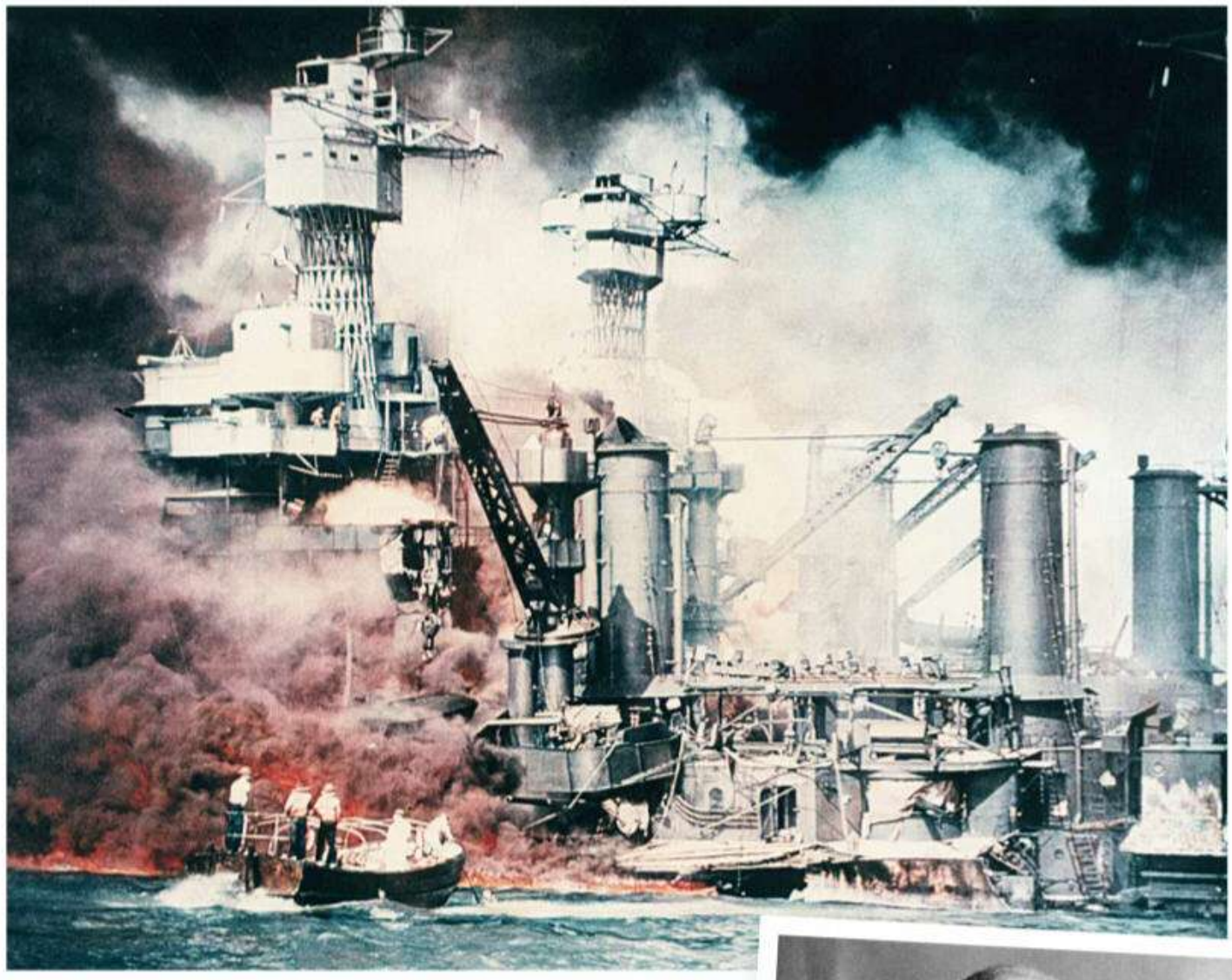
Words: Gavin Mortimer

It was the end of the Sunday morning shift on 7 December 1941, and for Privates Joseph Lockard and George Elliott, it had been uneventful like almost any other shift at the Opana Mobile Radar Station. Situated near Kahuku Point on the northern tip of Oahu, the third largest of the Hawaiian Islands, the station was operated on a part time basis. Shortly before the clock struck 7am, Elliott reminded Lockard that he needed training in using the oscilloscope.

As Lockard looked at the radar display while he was preparing to teach Elliott, he gave a murmur of surprise. There was something unusual on the oscilloscope. "Must be a flight of some sort," said Lockard. He and Elliott stared at the image. They agreed the aircraft, which were approximately 137 miles north of the island, numbered "more than 50".

Elliott called the Information Center at Fort Shafter, 30 miles south, and spoke to Lieutenant Kermit Tyler, whose role was to assist the controller in ordering planes to intercept enemy aircraft. On this particular Sunday, Tyler was the only officer in the Information Center, with neither the controller nor the aircraft identification officer on duty. Lockard shared what he could see on his screen, describing the "direction, the mileage and the apparent size of whatever it was". It was big, he emphasised: the "biggest sightings he'd ever seen".

For a moment, Tyler was nonplussed. But then a thought struck him. For most of the night the local radio station had been playing Hawaiian music, and he had heard that this had a secret meaning: it acted as a radio beam for the American aircraft en route to the island from the mainland. The radio beam was classified information, so Tyler could not relay it to Lockard; instead he told the radar operator, "don't worry". The aircraft were American, of that he was sure.



SCHEMES AND SPIES

Exactly 12 months earlier, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, had conceived the idea of a surprise attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. He expanded on his idea in a letter to Admiral Koshirō Oikawa, the navy minister, declaring that if Japan's imperialist ambitions in the Pacific were to be realised they must strike first, and strike with such ferocity that "the morale of the US Navy and her people... would sink to the extent that it could not be recovered".

The target he had in mind, Pearl Harbor, was home to the US Pacific Fleet.

ABOVE: **USS *West Virginia* (*foreground*) and USS *Tennessee* surrounded by smoke and flames during the attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941**

RIGHT: **Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the famed commander-in-chief of Japan's Combined Fleet, started planning the raid a whole year before it took place**

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3

MAIN: **Figures observe the explosions at Pearl Harbor from the nearby Hickam Field air base. The surprise raid would claim more than 2,400 American lives**

TOP RIGHT: **A US Navy photograph of Pearl Harbor taken in May 1940. The Japanese believed that destroying the Pacific Fleet would crush the morale of the American people**

BOTTOM RIGHT: **Japanese diplomats Saburō Kurusu (*right*) and Kichisaburō Nomura (*left*) pictured with Cordell Hull, November 1941. Their 'negotiations' with the US secretary of state would prove a charade**

> "Admiral Yamamoto declared that if Japan's imperialist ambitions were to be realised then they must strike first, and strike with ferocity"

It was an audacious plan so audacious that the Americans had never seriously entertained the thought that Pearl Harbor might be targeted. But Japan knew all about the defences of Pearl Harbor because of Takeo Yoshikawa, their top spy, who had arrived in Honolulu the previous March posing as a diplomat. By May 1941, as General George Marshall, chief of staff of the US Army, was boasting to President Franklin D Roosevelt about the impregnability of Pearl Harbor, Yoshikawa was passing on to his superiors the identities and locations of enemy battleships.

Throughout the summer of 1941 Japan and the US maintained diplomatic talks, but these were a charade for the Japanese. In November, US Secretary of State Cordell Hull received from the Japanese what he described as "an ultimatum" in which they demanded unlimited oil supplies, an end to the US freeze on its assets, and the discontinuation of aid to China. In exchange, all they offered was the partial withdrawal of their troops from Indochina. Yet even as the Japanese handed the offer to Hull, their task force was assembling in the remote Hitokappu Bay in the northeast of Japan, preparing a two wave attack involving more than 350 aircraft.

"TORA! TORA! TORA!"

At 7.40am on Sunday 7 December, Mitsuo Fuchida got his first sight of the 96 vessels of the Pacific Fleet at anchor in Pearl Harbor. He was the commander of the first wave of aircraft 183 in all (two had failed to take off), composed of 43 fighters, 49 high level bombers, 51 dive bombers and 40 torpedo planes. None of the three American aircraft carriers were in port, but that disappointment was assuaged when Fuchida saw how closely the enemy ships were positioned to one another. "I have never seen ships, even in the deepest peace, anchored at a distance of less than 500 to 1,000 yards from each other," he recalled. "This picture down there was hard to comprehend."

The navy patrol seaplane base in Kaneohe Bay, on the east coast of Hawaii, was hit first at 7.53am exactly the same moment that Fuchida radioed to the task force: "*Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Tiger! Tiger! Tiger!)", the codewords to confirm the enemy had been caught unawares. One flight of Lieutenant Commander Shigeharu Murata's torpedo bombers targeted the west side of Pearl Harbor, while the other headed for 'Battleship Row', where *Arizona, California, Vestal, Maryland, Nevada, Oklahoma, Tennessee* and *West Virginia* were anchored.

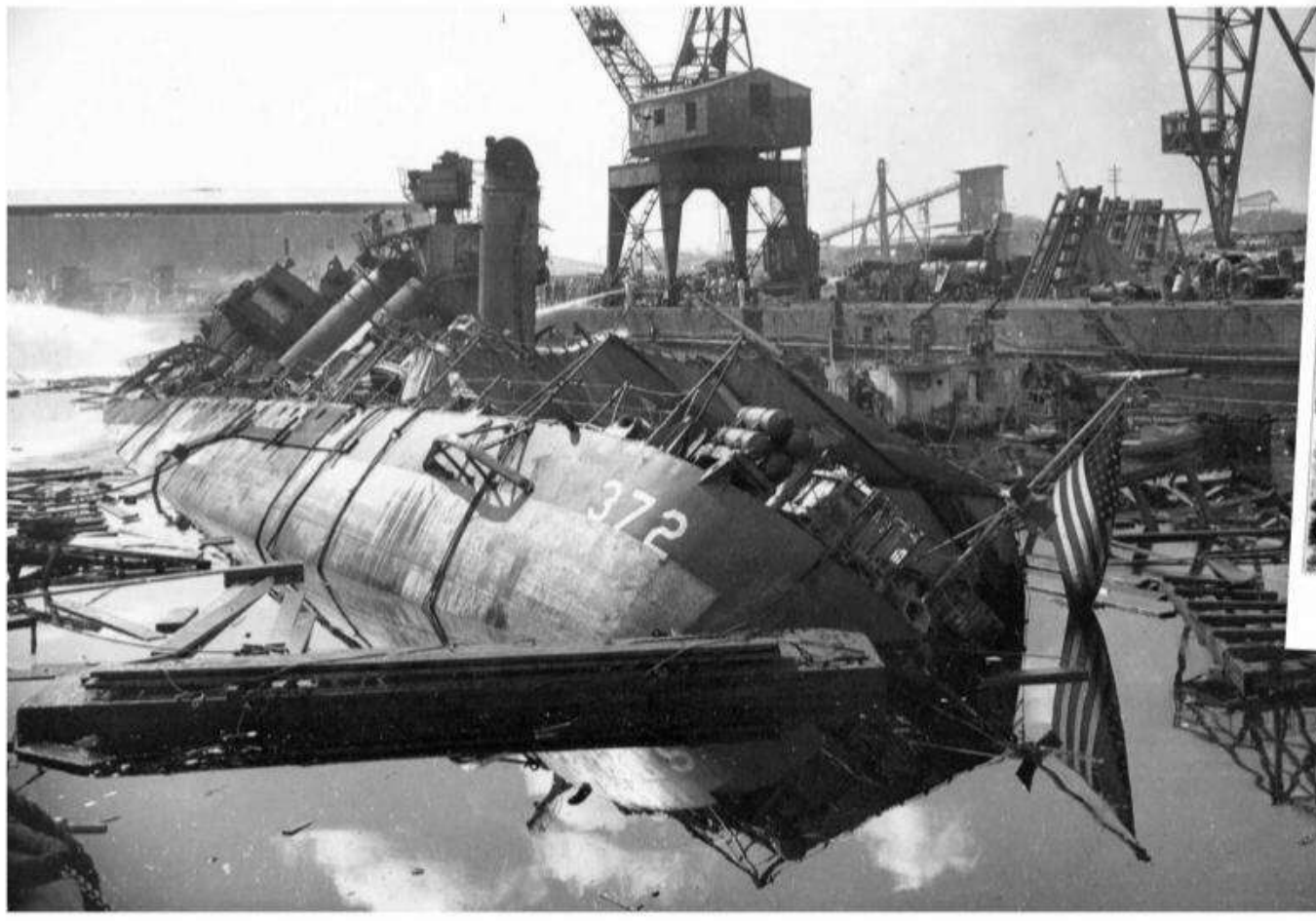
Adone Calderone was having breakfast on *West Virginia* when an 848 kilogram torpedo struck the forward ammunition magazine at 8.01am.

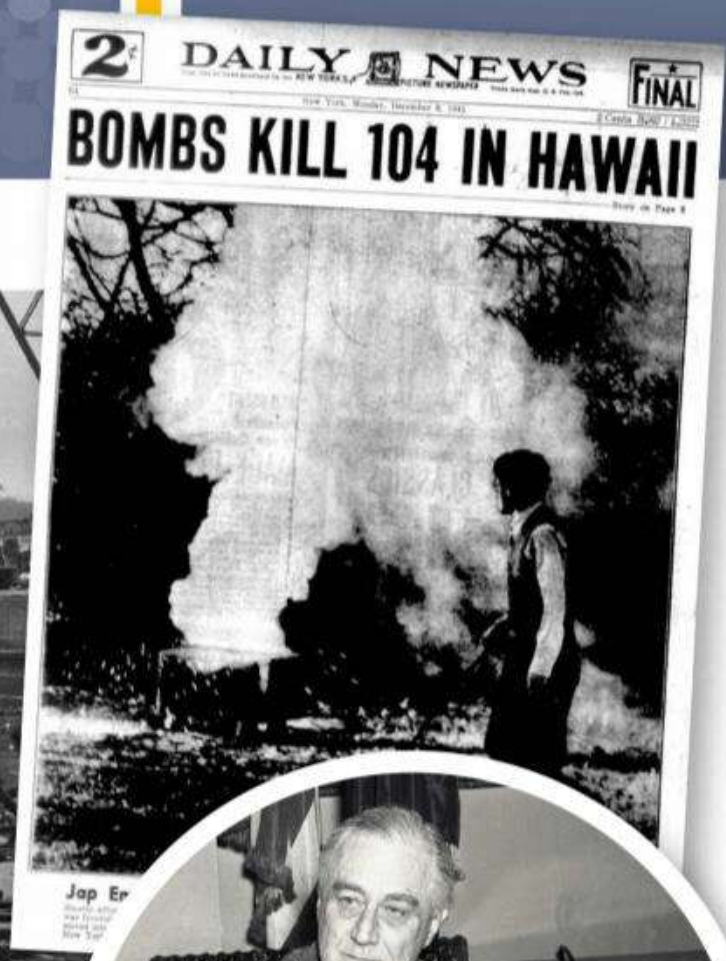
"We were sitting there, having a cup of coffee, and pretty soon, wham!" he later recalled. Several more 'whams' followed as torpedoes struck the port side, ripping gaping wounds in the hull through which water gushed. Calderone was sent below into a compartment to help counterflood *West Virginia* to stop it capsizing. As he and six others worked to save the ship, the waters around them rose.

"I looked at that and said, 'Well, this is it,'" said Calderone. "We were trapped." Then one of the men remembered there was an air vent in the adjoining

THIS MONTH IN... 1941

ANNIVERSARIES THAT HAVE MADE HISTORY





compartment that led to the top deck. Calderone swam through the long thin tube until, his lungs feeling as though they were about to burst, he reached the deck. He was greeted by a scene of devastation. "There was fire all over the place," he recalled, as Japanese fighters "machine gunned anything they could".

West Virginia remained afloat, but the end of *Arizona*, anchored at quay F 7 on Battleship Row, was witnessed by Admiral Husband Kimmel as he arrived at his HQ at 8.10am. In mute horror he saw *Arizona* "lift out of the water, then sink back down way down", taking with it 1,177 of its 1,512 strong crew. A similar fate also befell *Oklahoma*, with the loss of a further 429 men.

At 8.40am, the second wave of Japanese aircraft neared Hawaii. The 54 horizontal bombers of Lieutenant Commander Shigekazu Shimazaki's flight had in their sights the US airfields at Hickam, Kanehoe and Ford Island, while 78 dive bombers under the command of Lieutenant Commander Takashige Egusa began attacking what remained of the Pacific Fleet. The instructions for the 36 Zero fighters were to shoot up whatever they could at Kanehoe, Hickam, Ford Island, Wheeler Field and Bellows.

Although some of those on the ground bravely fought back (Guy Avery, an aviation machinist's mate third class, recalls one man shooting down a Zero armed only with an automatic rifle), it was too late. At 9.55am, Lieutenant Saburo Shindo circled Pearl Harbor and radioed his assessment report to Commander Minoru Genda: "Inflicted much damage."

A DAY OF INFAMY

Of the 350 aircraft that attacked Pearl Harbor, just 29 failed to return, with the only other Japanese losses being one fleet and five midget submarines. Euphoria was the overriding emotion among the task force, but Mitsuo Fuchida told Admiral Chūichi Nagumo, commander of the First Air Fleet, that they should refuel and return to destroy the dockyards and fuel storage tanks. Nagumo ignored the advice; at 1pm, he told the task force to turn "to the north at 26 knots".

That evening in Washington, President Roosevelt informed his cabinet that 18 vessels had been sunk, capsized or damaged, 188 aircraft destroyed, 2,403 people killed, and 1,178 wounded. Furthermore, Japan had invaded Thailand and British Malaya and carried out a wave of deadly aerial attacks against Guam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore and Wake Island.

Late into the night, Roosevelt fine tuned the speech he would make the next day to a joint session of the US Congress. He wanted to keep it short and to the point so that congress would back his declaration of war. The address lasted seven minutes, and it was broadcast live across the country. "Yesterday," he began, "December 7th, 1941 a date which will live in infamy the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the empire of Japan."

In Pearl Harbor, Adone Calderone and his crewmates surveyed the wreck of *West Virginia*. One hundred and six of their crewmates were dead, and the survivors were still in shock. But gradually the shock dissipated, to be replaced with anger. They would have their revenge against Japan. "We didn't win at Pearl Harbor," reflected Calderone, "but they didn't win the war."

MAIN: **The Mahan-class destroyers USS *Cassin* (*foreground*) and USS *Downes* were both heavily damaged, but their machinery and equipment would later be salvaged and reused in new vessels**

TOP RIGHT: **The front page of New York's *Daily News* in the aftermath of the attack. Only later would the true death toll become apparent**

BOTTOM RIGHT: **President Franklin D Roosevelt addresses the nation during a 'fireside chat' on 9 December 1941 – one day after the US declared war on Japan**

GAVIN MORTIMER is a historian and author. His books include *Guidance from the Greatest* (Constable, 2020) and an upcoming biography of SAS founder David Stirling, due for publication in 2022

GET HOOKED

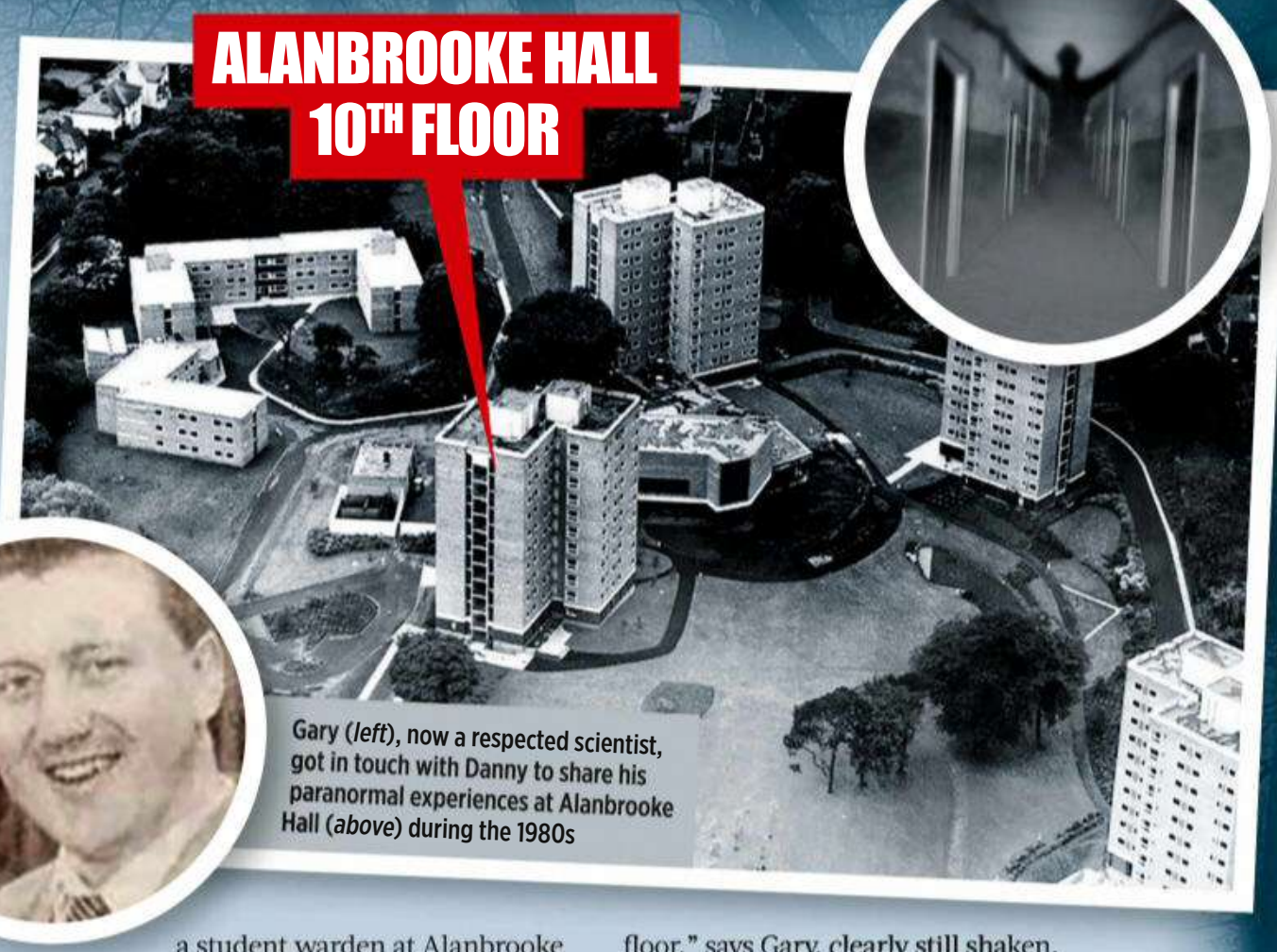
LISTEN

BBC RADIO 3

Writer Michael Goldfarb will be marking the 80th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attacks with a series of essays on BBC Radio 3 – *Our Fathers' War* – starting on 29 November: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006x3hl*

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

In November, BBC Radio's **Danny Robins** shared the story of a 'poltergeist' that once wrought havoc in a Belfast tower block. But there's now a new twist to the tale...



Gary (*left*), now a respected scientist, got in touch with Danny to share his paranormal experiences at Alanbrooke Hall (*above*) during the 1980s

Christmas isn't just a time for receiving unwanted socks and avoiding Brussels sprouts. The true purpose of the festive season is to tell ghost stories. There's a long tradition of the spooky winter's tale, stretching back to medieval times; a rush of fear to warm us on a cold night. After the Civil Wars, such tales were stamped out by Oliver Cromwell, but were rekindled in the modern era by Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and slightly more recently the BBC's tradition of broadcasting a Christmas ghost story.

So, for this issue, I'm revisiting one of the hauntings I've found most intriguing and chilling, to reveal astounding new evidence that will send a large shiver down your spine. Those who read the November 2021 edition of *BBC History Revealed* may remember the case of Room 6 11 at Alanbrooke Hall, a nondescript student hall of residence in Belfast. In 1981, Ken, a science student, was alone on the sixth floor during the Christmas break, when he experienced a series of terrifying events, including a sinister apparition and poltergeist activity. The truly odd thing was that Ken learnt the students who'd occupied the room the year before and year after had had similar experiences!

After Ken's episode aired as part of my new series *Uncanny* on BBC Sounds, I was inundated by responses. The story went viral across Northern Ireland, and amazingly, terrifyingly other witnesses came forward! We were able to track down Billy, one of the students who'd stayed in Room 6 11 the year after Ken. He confirmed he'd suffered a year marred by appearances of the same sinister apparition and objects flying across the room!

Then I spoke to Gary Foster. Now a respected science professor, he'd been a student warden at Alanbrooke Hall back in the 1980s. "I was the best poacher turned gamekeeper ever," says Gary, a rowdy mischievous student, now suddenly in charge of a hall full of other students. It was in the holidays, when Gary was alone in Alanbrooke, that he started to notice "the weirdness". Lights came on on empty floors, phones rang, and the lift moved of its own accord, going up and down without a passenger or without a human one, at least. He also had an experience identical to one of Ken's somebody banging on the door, only to open it and find an empty corridor! It felt as if there was something there, taunting him. "I joked they were going to have to do better with this thick skinned, sceptical scientist!"

The bit of Gary's story that made my blood run cold happened, ironically, in the intense heat of summer. He had one of the large windows in his 10th floor room open, to bring in a breeze. Walking towards it, he felt his feet connect with some big solid object and he fell forwards! "My feet were off the floor," says Gary, clearly still shaken. "I was balanced on the ledge, rocking, looking straight down, 10 floors. I wriggled back, heart thumping, to see what I had tripped over. There was absolutely nothing there."

The memory of this moment would be uncomfortable enough, but Gary's hair stood on end when he heard one detail in Ken's account – something he'd been told about Room 6-11 by the woman who cleaned his corridor. She believed the reason the room was haunted was because three students had died in it. One of the young men had fallen from the window. It was believed to be suicide, but there had always been rumours that he was pushed...

DANNY ROBINS is a writer, broadcaster and journalist. He is the presenter of the BBC Radio 4 podcasts *The Battersea Poltergeist* and *Uncanny*, available now on BBC Sounds

LISTEN

BBC SOUNDS

Gary discusses his time at Alanbrooke Hall in the fifth episode of *Uncanny*: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010x7c*

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DISCOVER THE ETERNAL

Available November 2021 from **onoto.com**

The Emancipation Proclamation

Words: Emma Slattery Williams

WHAT WAS THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION AND WHEN WAS IT ISSUED?

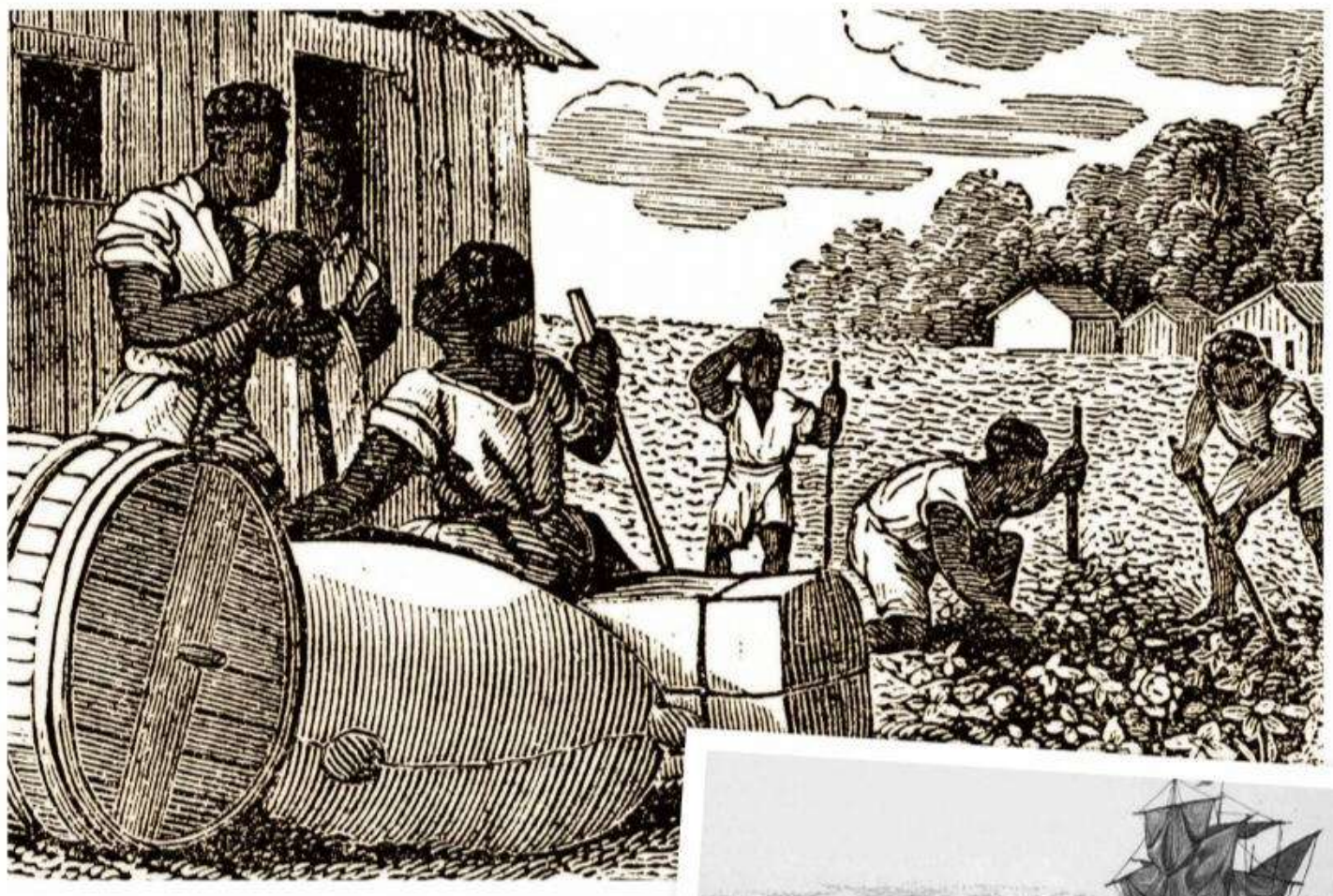
The Emancipation Proclamation was an edict of monumental significance in the history of the United States. Issued by President Abraham Lincoln, it declared that all enslaved people in the Confederate states which had seceded from the US and were at war with the Union in the North "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free".

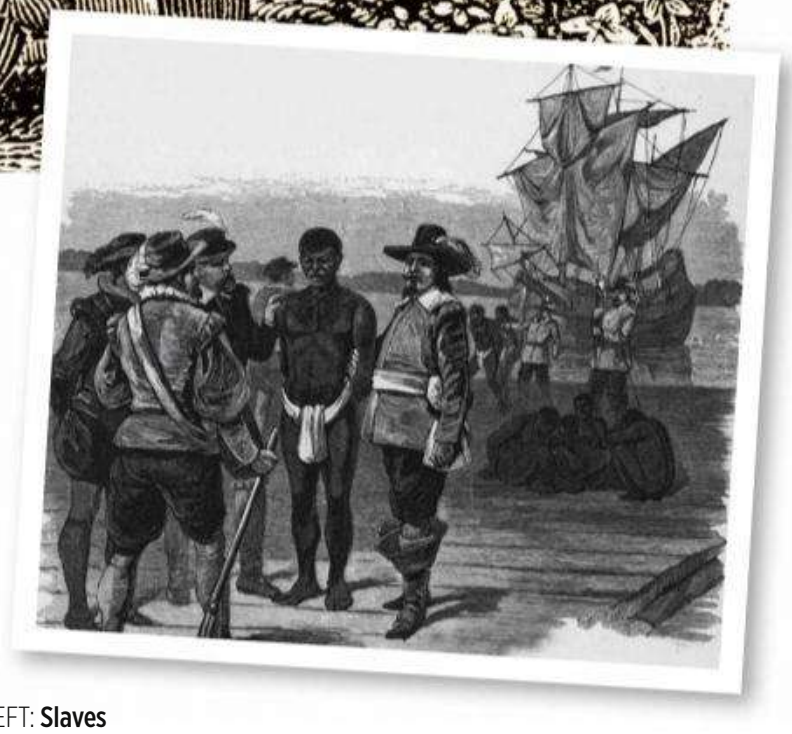
The proclamation was issued twice: the first, on 22 September 1862, was an ultimatum to the Confederacy to rejoin the Union within 100 days; and when all states refused, it officially came into effect on New Year's Day 1863. While it only applied to the South and had been instigated more out of "military necessity" than a moral imperative, the document transformed the fate of the American Civil War, gave hope to millions of black people living in bondage, and paved the way for the abolition of slavery.

HOW LONG HAD THERE BEEN SLAVERY IN THE US?

Before it became the independent United States of America in 1776, the British colonies in North America had been shipping African men and women across the Atlantic since the 16th century. The transatlantic slave trade grew into a huge business in the 17th and 18th centuries, as millions of enslaved people were transported to work on plantations, harvesting crops such as cotton, or to serve their white masters in their homes.

There had always been calls to end the barbaric trade where black slaves were treated as nothing more than property, to be used however their owners wished but the abolitionist movement in the US gained pace during the 19th century. In 1850, the much despised Fugitive Slave Act was passed, declaring that all runaway or escaped slaves had to be returned with the cooperation of all citizens, even those in free states. This emboldened abolitionists and inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe's polemical novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which so shocked Americans that attitudes towards slavery shifted.





"To white southerners, abolition was a fundamental threat to their way of life"

ABOVE LEFT: **Slaves on cotton plantations faced brutal conditions**

ABOVE RIGHT: **More than 12 million Africans were transported over the Atlantic**

GETTY IMAGES X2

WHY DID THE CIVIL WAR START?

Political, social and cultural differences between the North and South had caused tensions since the birth of the US, with slavery a constant and highly divisive issue. The North had prohibited slavery and did not wish to see it extended to the western territories seeking statehood, while the South relied on the mass unpaid labour that slavery provided for its agricultural economy. To many white southerners, abolition was a fundamental threat to their way of life.

IN A NUTSHELL

YOUR BRIEF EXPLAINER TO HISTORY'S HOT TOPICS

Fighting the expansion of slavery was the Republican Party, formed in 1854, which selected Abraham Lincoln as its presidential candidate in the 1860 election. By the time he was inaugurated, seven southern states had seceded (four more would join later) and formed the Confederate States of America. They had their own president, Jefferson Davis, and a constitution endorsing slavery.

Civil war broke out on 12 April 1861 when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, which was occupied by Union troops. Four long years of war followed – still the bloodiest in the nation's history, leaving at least three-quarters of a million people dead. It was in that climate that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

WHAT ATTEMPTS HAD BEEN MADE TO BAN SLAVERY BEFORE THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION?

While it could be assumed that such a historic document as the Emancipation Proclamation must have been the first major attempt to bring an end to slavery in the US, abolition had been taking root in the North for decades.

In 1780, Pennsylvania passed An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery, the first such act ever adopted in a democracy. It stopped any more enslaved people being brought into the state, required slave owners to register their slaves annually or face forfeiture, and declared that all children born after that time were free regardless of their race. Soon, other states followed this example and, by 1804, slavery was abolished in the North.

By then, the Slave Trade Act had been passed by Congress, forbidding American ships from participating in the international slave trade. Then, in 1808, the US abolished the importing of enslaved people. This did not stop the domestic slave trade, but was a clear demonstration that the North, with a larger population than the South, was dominating the House of Representatives, the lower house of Congress.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 made it the law to return escaped slaves to their owners, even if they had reached a free state

As already mentioned, an issue was what would happen in the western territories. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 – creating the Northwest Territory, comprising the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and northeast Minnesota – banned slavery completely. Then, when the US annexed huge swathes of land in the Mexican-American War (1846-48), the resulting Compromise of 1850 prevented slavery in places like California, but opened the opportunity of its extension to areas where it had been prohibited.

DID THE PROCLAMATION INTEND TO END SLAVERY?

On 22 September 1862, Lincoln issued the following proclamation:

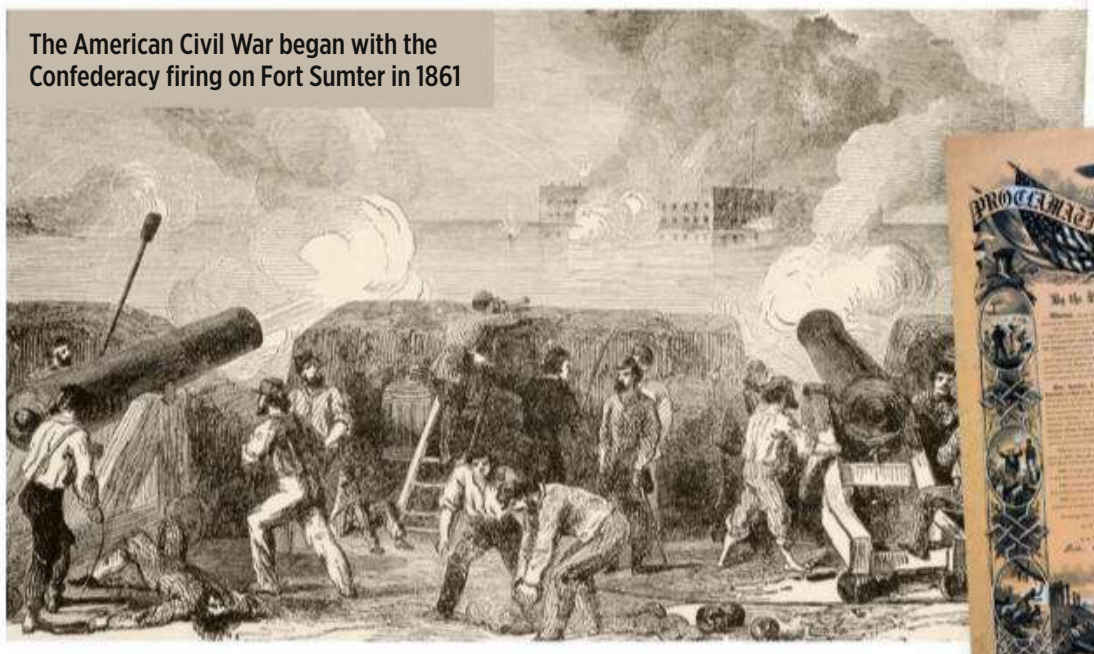
"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom."

Lincoln timed the announcement so that the North would be in a position of strength, rather than it appear like an act of desperation. The battle of Antietam that September, while hardly a decisive victory, gave him that opportunity. When the deadline came and went with no action from the Confederate South, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on 1 January 1863.

Lincoln was not primarily motivated by ending slavery. Rather, he was committed to preserving the Union, famously saying: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that." But freeing enslaved people in the South had a clear military aim, of depriving the Confederacy of their labour force and the goods they produced.

HOW MANY SLAVES WERE FREED?

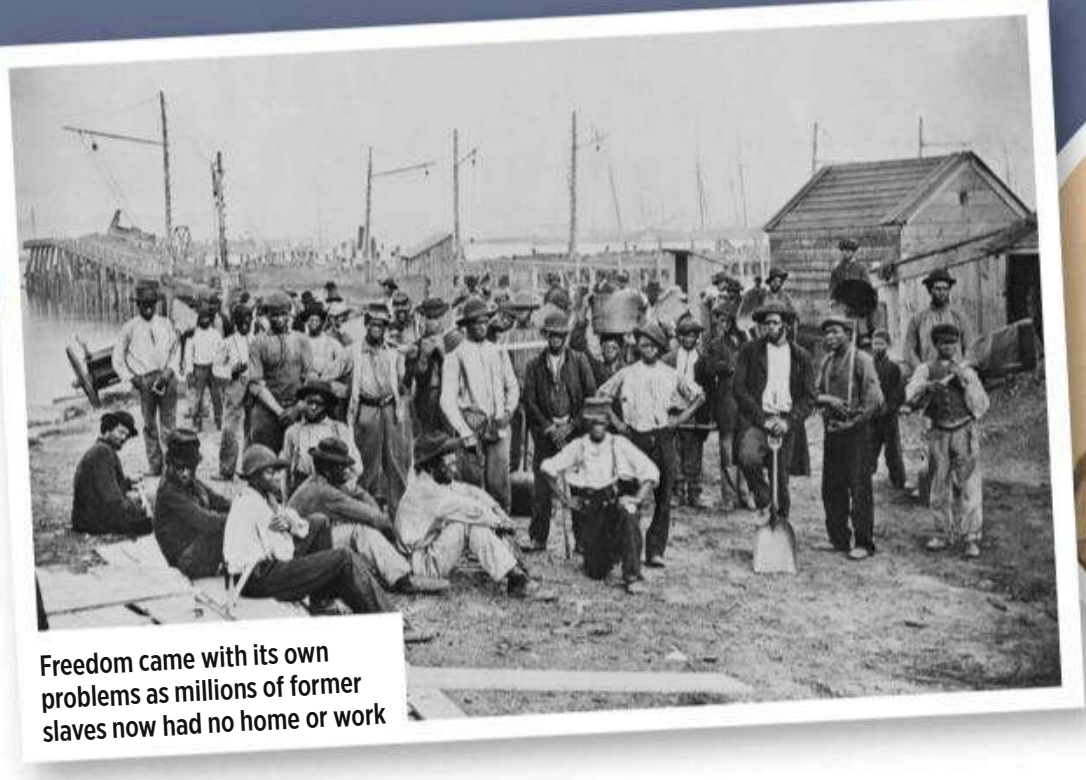
Since the Emancipation Proclamation only applied to states in the Confederacy,



The American Civil War began with the Confederacy firing on Fort Sumter in 1861

US President Abraham Lincoln (*seated, third from left*) reads the Emancipation Proclamation, a copy of which can be seen left. Intended to weaken the South in the war, it paved the way for abolition

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1



Freedom came with its own problems as millions of former slaves now had no home or work

Around 200,000 freed slaves, like this soldier, joined the Union military in the Civil War

"The proclamation profoundly changed the meaning of the war: it was now a moral crusade for freedom"

who were not going to free their slaves, it had little effect for the vast majority of the roughly 3.5 million enslaved people in the South. Although, tens of thousands were emancipated in areas where the Union had already occupied, and it encouraged others to seize freedom for themselves by escaping to the North.

HOW DID THE PROCLAMATION AFFECT THE COURSE OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR?

The proclamation profoundly changed the meaning of the war: by inextricably linking the Union's victory with the defeat of slavery, it was now a moral crusade for freedom. The importance of this was immediate, as foreign powers who could have entered the war on the side of the Confederacy in the hopes of weakening the US further, such as Britain and France, were dissuaded.

The proclamation also allowed black soldiers to join the Union military, meaning that with every escaped or emancipated slave the South got weaker, and the North got stronger. Around 180,000 black men enlisted in the army – fighting in segregated regiments – and 20,000 in the navy.

As the war slowly approached its end with victory for the North all but assured, Lincoln campaigned for re election in 1864 with the promise of introducing a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery permanently. There was a concern that the proclamation would not be binding once the war was over, so plans had to be put in motion quickly. By January 1865, Lincoln secured the votes to rush through the 13th Amendment.

A few months later, on 9 April, the Confederate commander Robert E Lee surrendered to Union general Ulysses S Grant, ending the war.

WHAT HAPPENED TO LINCOLN AFTER THE WAR?

Just five days after the surrender, Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theatre, in Washington DC, by Confederate sympathiser John Wilkes Booth. He did not live to see the US rebuilt after four years of war, nor did he get to see the official end of slavery in the nation, as the 13th Amendment would not be ratified until 6 December.

Yet while not a staunch abolitionist to begin with, Lincoln recognised the Emancipation Proclamation as one of the greatest achievements of his presidency. On that historic day, 1 January 1863, he had said, "I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right than I do in signing this paper."

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MILLIONS OF FORMERLY ENSLAVED PEOPLE?

Finding a place in the still United States for millions of emancipated men and women was one of the great challenges of the so called Reconstruction era. They had no homes, and employment was difficult to find since nearly all were uneducated. The Freedmen's Bureau was established by Congress to find jobs, medical aid and food for freed slaves, as well as set up schools, hospitals and settlements. The bureau, however, was severely underfunded and faced fierce opposition from white southerners.

Juneteenth is now a national holiday across the US, celebrating the day in 1865 that the last slaves were told they were free

Allowed to form power bases again after the war, the southern states imposed 'black codes' – restrictive laws intended to suppress black rights. Essentially, it was another form of slavery. A period known as 'Radical Reconstruction' did see the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1868 – granting black people citizenship – and the 15th in 1870, which gave black men the vote. But segregation laws were also passed, which would last for almost a century until the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s.

HOW HAS EMANCIPATION BEEN CELEBRATED?

States have their own date to mark Emancipation Day, but perhaps the best-known today is 19 June. It was on that day in 1865 that the last slaves in the US were finally informed of their freedom, when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, with the news. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued more than two years previously, Texas had been largely unaffected by the fighting of the war, so it took a long time for the 250,000 enslaved people in the state to be told. The following year, meals, music, prayers and parades were held to celebrate, and soon these festivities spread.

Today, this day is known as Juneteenth, and it holds huge significance for African-American communities across the US. On that date in 1968, some 50,000 people descended on the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital for Solidarity Day, just two months after the Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. It is still widely celebrated with community gatherings, religious services, speeches and educational events. In 2021, Joe Biden made Juneteenth a federal holiday upon becoming US president.

LISTEN

BBC RADIO 4 Black emancipation and the end of slavery are discussed in an episode of *Thinking Allowed* on BBC Radio 4: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00tbgwr*

Hatshepsut's journey to the top

Hatshepsut is one of only a handful of female pharaohs to have ruled ancient Egypt – but should her legacy be that of a strong, effective ruler, or of a scheming stepmother desperate for power?

Hatshepsut was born into one of the most famous dynasties to ever rule ancient Egypt: the 18th dynasty. Founded by Ahmose I around 1550 BC, this sprawling family tree would go on to include some of the most well known pharaohs in history, including the 'boy king' Tutankhamun and 'heretic king' Akhenaten.

Yet, despite being of royal descent her father was King Thutmose I Hatshepsut was never expected to rule Egypt. Before Hatshepsut was born, Thutmose I had sired a son with another wife, Mutnofret, who then acceded the throne as Thutmose II upon his father's death in around 1492 BC. To protect the dynasty from rival families, Hatshepsut was then married to her half sibling, and subsequently gave birth to a daughter, Neferure. But in 1479 BC, Thutmose II died, too, leaving his young son from another marriage Thutmose III to inherit the throne. As was customary at the time, Hatshepsut became regent on behalf of her stepson, who was around three years old.

TAKING THE REIGN

After serving as regent for a few years, Hatshepsut began demanding more political power, and was duly promoted to the position of co ruler alongside Thutmose III. Despite her title, historians have argued that it was Hatshepsut who dominated political decisions, and that Thutmose III's involvement in matters of government was minimal. Similarly, experts are also divided as to Hatshepsut's motive for taking control of the throne: while some have argued that she was driven by a thirst for power, more recent scholarship suggests that she did so to protect the throne from a rival branch of the royal family.

Either way, the reforms she introduced would prove hugely important. Determined to demonstrate her authority as a legitimate pharaoh, Hatshepsut massively expanded Egypt's economy, launching a trading expedition to the Land of Punt a wealthy kingdom that is thought to have existed somewhere along the Red Sea coast. The mission, commemorated on the walls of the temple at Deir el Bahri, saw Egyptian ships return home with masses of gold and ivory and numerous myrrh trees, making it a very fruitful venture indeed.

A relief image depicting Hatshepsut's half brother and husband, Thutmose II. His death in 1479 BC paved the way for Hatshepsut to rule first as regent, and then as co-ruler

Similarly, Hatshepsut sought to secure her legacy by embarking on huge architectural projects, constructing new places of worship, and restoring the grand Temple of Karnak, which had originally begun life during the reign of King Senusret I in 1971 BC. At Karnak, she also added a chapel and two obelisks that both measured nearly 100 feet tall.

After many years in power, Hatshepsut died in around 1458 BC, although archaeologists are unsure of the precise date. She was then laid to rest in the Valley of the Kings, and in accordance with her wishes, her father's sarcophagus was interred with her in the same tomb: a sign of the high regard Hatshepsut held him in.

DECIPHERING THE TRUTH

But Hatshepsut's story doesn't end there. Following her demise, Thutmose III became Egypt's sole pharaoh, embarking on a period of rule that was to last more than 30 years. Eager to carve out his own legacy, he set about erasing evidence of Hatshepsut's reign.

Again, however, historians are divided as to the ruler's motives. Whereas it was originally thought that Thutmose was bitter about the power his stepmother had wielded, experts have suggested that his eagerness to expunge her from the record was because he faced usurpation by rival family members. By delegitimising her, he could strengthen his position on the throne and ensure his own heir's succession.

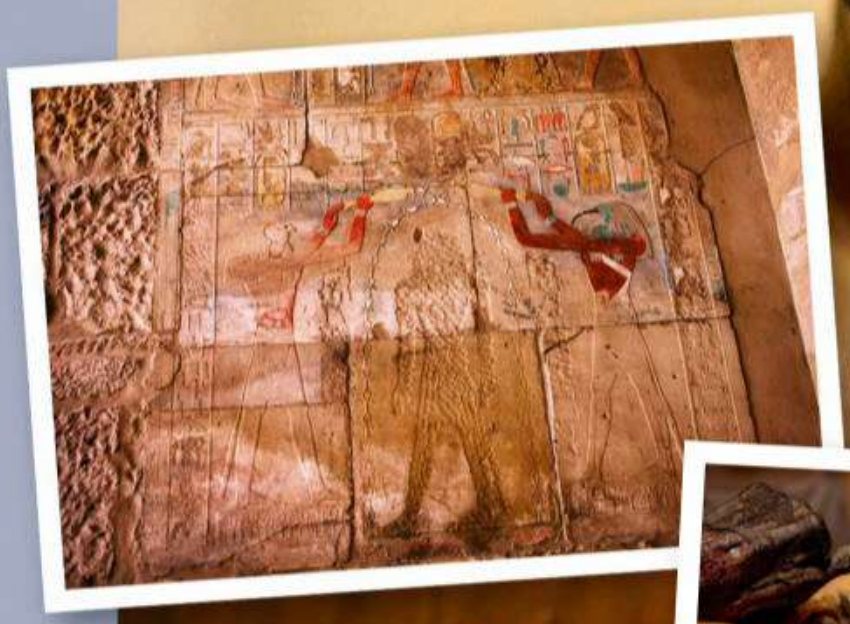
As a result of Thutmose's actions, there was very little evidence of Hatshepsut's rule until the 19th century, when archaeologists began translating the hieroglyphics adorning the walls of Deir el Bahri. These ultimately revealed her position as a pharaoh, and her remarkable successes as a ruler.

The exact whereabouts of Hatshepsut's mummy, however, would remain a mystery for several generations. Howard Carter, the British archaeologist who later discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun, located the first of Hatshepsut's sarcophagi (one of three she prepared) in 1903, but it was found to be empty. A year later, two further sarcophagi were tracked down in the Valley of the Kings, but it wasn't until 2007 that a mummy was finally identified as being the remains of Hatshepsut. Although some experts have since cast doubt on this identification, one thing is undisputed: Hatshepsut's legacy as a trailblazing female ruler is now secure.

ALAMY X5, GETTY IMAGES X1

A statue of Hatshepsut on display at the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo. Until the 19th century, surprisingly little was known about the skilled ruler's reign

"Despite her title as co-ruler, historians have argued that it was Hatshepsut who dominated political decisions"



ABOVE: **Detail from a defaced relief of Hatshepsut inside the Temple of Karnak. Following Hatshepsut's death, her surviving co-ruler – Thutmose III – sought to erase her legacy in order to consolidate his own reign**

RIGHT: **The mummified remains of a woman thought to be Hatshepsut can be viewed at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo – although not all experts agree with the identification**

FAR RIGHT: **An aerial view of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, which forms part of the wider Deir el-Bahri complex near the city of Luxor**

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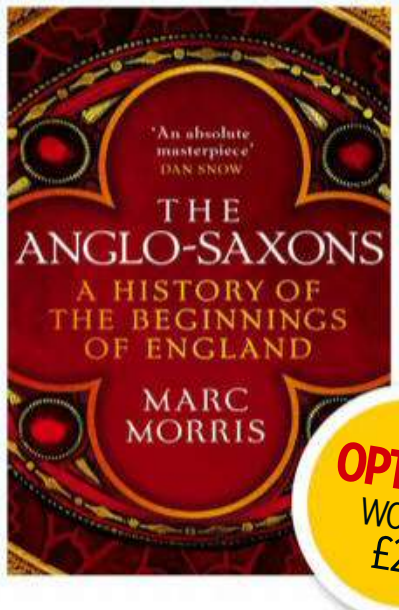

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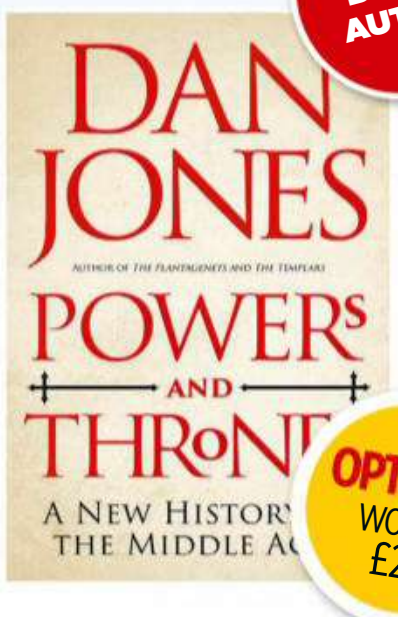

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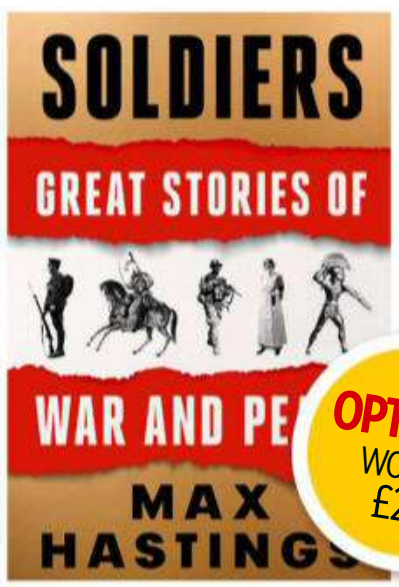

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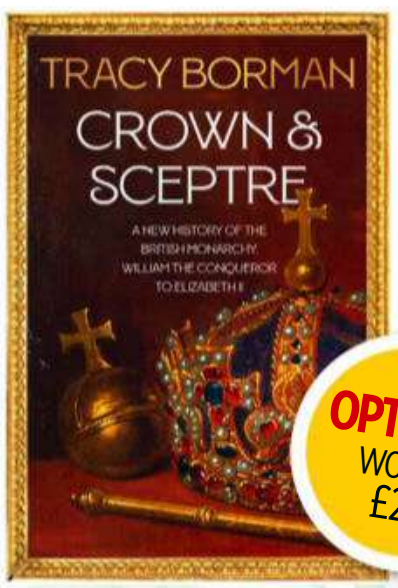

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PODCAST

Professor Nicholas Orme discusses the medieval Church on the HistoryExtra podcast: *historyextra.com/medieval-church-podcast*

ALAMY X3, GETTY IMAGES X6

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

In medieval England, the Church was more than just a building you visited when you got married: it was the cornerstone of society. From your baptism to your dying breaths, it was there at every important milestone in life, and regular attendance not just on Sundays was expected from the majority of the population.

Crucially, the institution of the Church also exerted much more control over matters than we might expect today, and was not only responsible for helping the poor and needy, but keeping a watchful eye on the behaviour of its flock.

In this month's Essential Guide, we'll be taking you on a journey back to the Middle Ages, shining a spotlight on the lives of ordinary English worshippers, and revealing what it was like to serve within the Church itself.

With expert historical insight provided courtesy of Professor Nicholas Orme, we'll also explore the role of women, investigate the surprising meanings behind church 'graffiti', and examine the gruesome fates that befell those who were condemned as heretics. We begin on the next page, however, by answering some of the topic's biggest questions...

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Professor Nicholas Orme answers questions about faith during the Middle Ages

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From the pope to parish priests, we look at how the Church was organised

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How did the Church mark the major milestones in a parishioner's life?

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We decipher the meanings behind the markings scrawled in England's churches

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Meet the men of faith tasked with spreading the gospel far and wide

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The Church may have been a patriarchal institution – but women still played a vital role

55 Heresy
How did religious dissenters fare in medieval England?

NICHOLAS ORME is emeritus professor of history at the University of Exeter. He is the author of more than 30 books, including *The History of England's Cathedrals* (Impress Books, 2017) and *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale University Press, 2021).

DID YOU KNOW?

GIVING BACK

The Church was one of the main distributors of charity during the medieval period and gave out alms – such as money or food – to the poor and needy. Hospitals, run by religious orders, cared for the sick and poor, and gave shelter to travellers.

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Professor Nicholas Orme answers key questions about religion and worship in the Middle Ages

Q: Why was the Church so important in medieval England?

A: The Church in the Middle Ages was more than just a way of connecting with God; it was a whole belief system. Christianity in medieval times didn't just focus on people's relationship with God. It also set out to explain history, science, ethics, how one should behave, and so on. Whole areas of study that we would now separate into science or sociology or politics, fell under religion in the medieval centuries. What's more, the Church was responsible for many things which, nowadays, we would look to the government to care for, such as education, morality, and charity.

The Church also had an important role in medieval life, which it has somewhat lost today. Nowadays, there are lots of different things you can be doing on a Sunday morning rather than attending church services. In a rural community of the Middle Ages, the local church would have been a major place to meet and socialise. Many churches developed social organisations of maidens (girls aged from 12 up to marriage), young men of similar ages, and married women or 'wives'. So church was not just a place where people worshipped on a Sunday; it was a place where friendship groups could gather, too.

Q: Where and how did the Church get its wealth?

A: The Church was not a single body, so you cannot say that it was rich any more than you can say that British society today is rich. There were enormous variations of wealth within the Church and its various institutions. At one extreme, there were archbishops and bishops who received huge salaries, although they had to pay the costs of their administrations out of their own pockets. At the other end of the scale, poor chaplains and curates earned about £3–£5 a year, which wasn't much different to the annual income of artisans and labourers. Monasteries, too, might be

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3

LEFT: **A statue of a bishop in Canterbury Cathedral. Those at the very top of the Church hierarchy could receive huge salaries**

RIGHT: **Churches were entitled to receive one tenth of the parish's agricultural production**

BELOW: **The interior walls of St Mary's Church in Kempley, Gloucestershire, retain some of the original medieval decoration**

rich or barely able to survive. There were huge variations in wealth.

As to where the money came from, the Church possessed endowments. Individuals over the centuries gave lands and money, particularly to support monasteries since monks could not go out into the world and earn money for themselves. The clergy of the parish churches were supported by tithes and offerings. Tithes were the most important part of their income, allowing them to receive a tenth of agricultural production – corn, barley and rye, and one tenth of newborn animals – calves, piglets, lambs, as well as honey, milk, cheese and so on. Offerings of money formed a smaller part of clergy income. They were made four times of the year and at baptisms, marriages and funerals. Parish sizes and wealth varied hugely from one to another, so being a parish priest didn't indicate what income you might receive. Incomes could vary from as much as £80 or £100 a year to as little as £3 or £4.

Q: What would the sensory experience of a medieval church have been like?

A: Ideally, churches were to be neat and colourful, with hangings of coloured fabric on the altar. Clergy wore coloured vestments for mass and some other services. But it all depended on how much a church could afford. It is often thought that the inside walls of all medieval churches were decorated, and they were up to a point, but sometimes the decoration would have been quite simple – imitation brickwork, plaster or stencil patterns, for example. There are many records of churches lacking watertight roofs, window glass and satisfactory furnishings, and some would have looked rather shabby.

Inside, churches would have smelt of damp, candle smoke, incense and possibly the bodies of dead worthies buried beneath the floor. At a well-attended service you would also have smelt humanity! Floors were covered with straw or rushes, renewed from time to time.

"WHOLE AREAS OF STUDY THAT WE WOULD NOW SEPARATE INTO SCIENCE OR SOCIOLOGY OR POLITICS FELL UNDER RELIGION"

The sounds inside depended on the size and wealth of the church. Wealthy churches with many clergy and singers would sing all services in plainsong (music sung in unison). Then, especially from the 15th century, masses and anthems might be sung in harmony in the more elaborate music known as polyphony. Polyphony was first mainly ▶

sung in royal and noble chapels, from which it spread to cathedrals, monasteries, and the wealthier parish churches. Many lesser churches can have heard it only from visiting singers on special occasions.

Q: Was attending church compulsory?

From puberty you were expected to go to church on Sundays and for religious festivals. There were about 40 or 50 important festivals in the church calendar, so for about 90 days of the year, you would be expected to be in church, at least for mass in the morning. However, the Church had to accept that it could not impose complete attendance and exceptions had to be made for shepherds, fishermen and servants.

In practice, making people attend church was difficult. A priest could refuse to hear their confessions or report them to the church courts where they might be fined or made to do public penance, but it was a long winded process. There were always some people in a parish who did not go to church very often. Attending church on Easter Sunday was absolutely compulsory for all adults, however, so almost everyone would have been there on that festival.

Parishioners with certain jobs, such as shepherds, were sometimes allowed to miss church services

Q: Were children required to attend church?

A: Small children were often taken to church because they could not be safely left at home. Equally, there are records of accidents that happened when parents left them at home, possibly in the care of an elder sibling. As mentioned, children did not have to attend church until puberty: indeed 15th and 16th century congregations could be unforgiving about the restlessness and noise of younger children in church.

There were no services specially for children except on Saint Nicholas Day (6 December) and the Feast of the Holy Innocents (28 December), when a boy would be dressed as a bishop, with a mitre and staff, and preside over the service with a retinue of other boys. When the Reformation came, however, the first Book of Common Prayer – in English – in 1549, decreed that parish priests should hold regular classes in church to provide religious instruction.

"THE CHURCH HAD TO ACCEPT THAT IT COULDN'T IMPOSE 100 PER CENT ATTENDANCE"

ABOVE: **The disruption caused by noisy young parishioners wasn't always tolerated**
RIGHT: **A depiction of Saint Valentine as a 'boy bishop'. A young male of the parish was usually dressed in a similar fashion on the Feast of the Holy Innocents (28 December)**

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X5

Q: What happened during a medieval church service?

A: We know little about how churches were used before 1300. Until then, the likelihood is that there were not many seats, except for the nobility and gentry who sat in the chancel with the clergy. Instead, the congregation may have mostly stood, unless they brought their own stools, and knelt at significant points in the mass. The most important of these was the point at which the bread and wine of the Eucharist was consecrated and held up by the priest to be venerated.

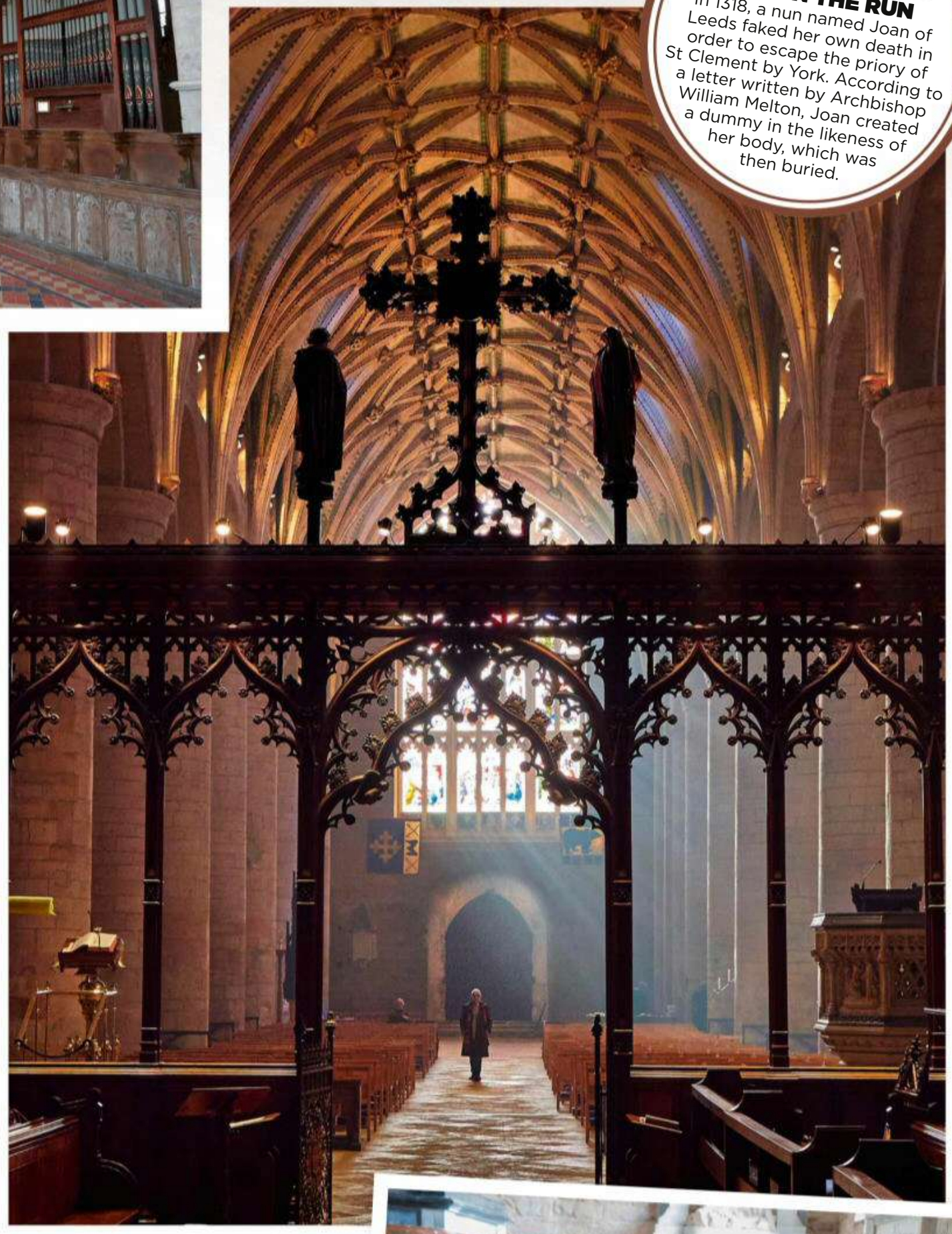
Seating seems to have become more common during the 14th century, and normal during the 15th. Congregations wished to imitate the seated nobility, and people wanted seats that recognised their social rank. Parish church authorities were eventually obliged to put in general seating and grade it accordingly. The wealthy would sit (or stand or kneel) in seats at the front, with their inferiors further back. Seating was allocated by the churchwardens, the lay officers who looked after the church fabric and furnishings, and fees were usually charged for seats.

As for the religious experience, services were conducted in Latin and took place in the chancel at the east end of the church, which had a big screen separating it from the western nave where most of the congregation were placed. People were not expected to follow the text of the service or say responses as they would do today. That role was performed by the parish clerk, with the congregation watching from a distance. If you were pious, you might bring a rosary or a prayer book with you and say quiet prayers, so there would have been a subdued murmur of voices in the nave alongside the service itself.

What most people do not realise is that, by the 15th century, the Latin mass included some material in English. At the beginning, all were sprinkled with holy water, and heard an English verse reminding them of their baptism.

ABOVE: **The chancel – the area surrounding the altar – at St Mary's Church, Edlesborough, Bucks**

RIGHT: **Looking west through the rood screen at Tewkesbury Abbey, out towards the nave**



DID YOU KNOW?

NUN ON THE RUN

In 1318, a nun named Joan of Leeds faked her own death in order to escape the priory of St Clement by York. According to a letter written by Archbishop William Melton, Joan created a dummy in the likeness of her body, which was then buried.

Then, in the middle of the service, there were announcements, and prayers for the pope, the king, the crops and individuals in need. There was sometimes (but not necessarily often) a sermon. At the end of the service, an ordinary loaf was blessed and divided up, another English verse was said, and everyone was given a fragment of the bread. Medieval congregations were not given the communion bread and wine at mass, hence the 'substitute' of the holy loaf. Only at Easter did the congregation receive the communion bread, and even then not the wine.

Q: Were men and women separated during church services?

A: This is hard to answer. Sometimes they were, and sometimes they weren't. Wealthy people do not seem to have been separated according to sex because we hear of nobility, gentry and merchants sitting with their wives in the chancel or side chapels. The rest of the congregation may well have been separated, but the practice probably varied from church to church. At times when they were separated, women would usually have been placed on the north side of the church, and men on the south side.

The reason for this is that the north side was considered to be the 'safe' side, while the south was considered 'unsafe'. The rood the figure of Christ on the cross set above the entrance to the chancel always faced west. A figure of the Virgin Mary was placed at his right (north), with Saint John the Evangelist to his left (south). The north side, the side presided over by the Virgin Mary, was considered to be the side of the saved, and women were seated here because they were deemed to be more open to temptation. Men were placed on the 'unsafe' side because they were reckoned to be better able to stand up to evil. But equally there were other customs that dictated where you sat, such as certain seats being tied to particular properties.

Going to church was a very different experience from what it is today. It centred on ceremony not on instruction. Yet through regular attendance, the form and much of the meaning of services could become understood, and for literate people, at least, services could be supplemented by reading instructive books at home.

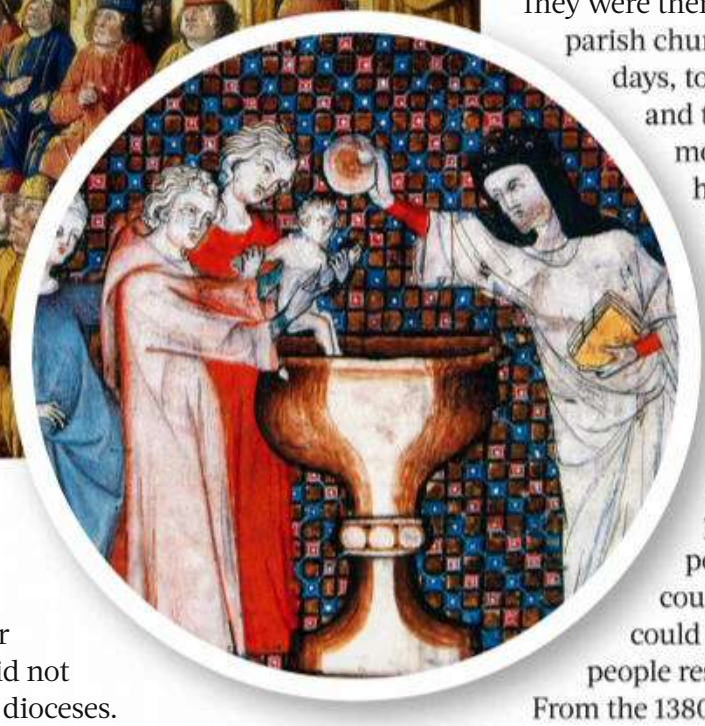
INTERVIEW: DAVE MUSGROVE
WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN

NICHOLAS ORME is emeritus professor of history at the University of Exeter. His most recent book is *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale University Press, 2021)

Choir stalls with carved misericords beneath their folding seats. These ledges allowed people to remain partially standing during prayer

AN ORDER OF SERVICE

Professor Nicholas Orme outlines the hierarchy of the medieval Church – from the pope to the parishioners



It is often assumed that the medieval Church was a monolithic organisation: strict in its beliefs and powerful in enforcing them. In truth, it was more like modern education in Britain: a system with some overarching rules, but one delivered by many different agencies, some of which had quite contrary aims to the others.

The Church was headed by the pope, based in Italy or France. He was prayed for in churches every Sunday, but in practice he was chiefly a legal authority. The laws that governed the Church and regulated people's moral lives were issued or validated by him. He gave dispensations in individual cases, and sometimes heard legal appeals from the authorities lower down. Otherwise, he had little contact with most churches.

Locally, the Church was run by bishops, who each ruled an area called a diocese. They approved the appointment of parish clergy, oversaw the running of churches, and held Church courts. The latter dealt with crimes against the clergy, moral crimes by the laity, marriages, and wills – matters not yet under the secular courts. They also consecrated churches and administered confirmation to children.

Even so, for most of the time, local churches rarely saw or interacted with their bishops. Indeed, bishops did not have total power over their dioceses. Many monasteries and all houses of friars were independent and run by their own leaders. Certain other churches, especially royal chapels and the parishes belonging to them, were also exempt from control.

The most important unit of the Church was the parish and the parish church, of which there were about 10,000 in England by the end of the Middle Ages. Each church was staffed by a clergyman, called a 'rector' or 'vicar', appointed by a 'patron' who might be the king, one of the nobility or gentry, a bishop, or a monastery. Their choice was approved by the bishop unless it broke the rules about appointments.

The clergyman had to provide daily and weekly services in the church, baptise, marry and bury parishioners, and hear their confessions at least once a year. In return, he was entitled to take tithes (a tenth of all the crops and young animals produced in the parish) and any money offered in church. Some churches had other clergy: curates assisting the clergyman and chantry priests praying for the dead. There were also 'collegiate churches', with larger staffs of clergy to stage the daily services in a grander way.

Every lay person belonged to a parish. All were baptised at birth and became full members of the Church at puberty. They were then expected to attend their parish church on Sundays and festival days, to pay tithes and offerings, and to observe the Church's moral laws. They had to help maintain half of the church building (the nave) and all the furnishings. Maintenance and fund-raising were organised by churchwardens, chosen from the parishioners.

All this describes a perfect system, but in practice, systems are never perfect. Church authorities could be lax, parish clergy could be negligent, and lay people resistant to Church law. From the 1380s there were also Lollards, who dissented from some of the beliefs of the Church, and it was hard for the authorities to deal with more than the most flagrant cases of defiance. In the end, the control the Church exerted over the local clergy and laity was weaker than the claims of the Church would suggest.

ABOVE: **Parishioners were baptised at birth, becoming full members of the Church at puberty**

ABOVE LEFT: **Pope Urban II presides over the Council of Clermont in 1095 – the synod that launched the crusades**

BELOW: **Marriages were dealt with by the Church courts**

NICHOLAS ORME is emeritus professor of history at the University of Exeter. His latest book is *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale University Press, 2021)

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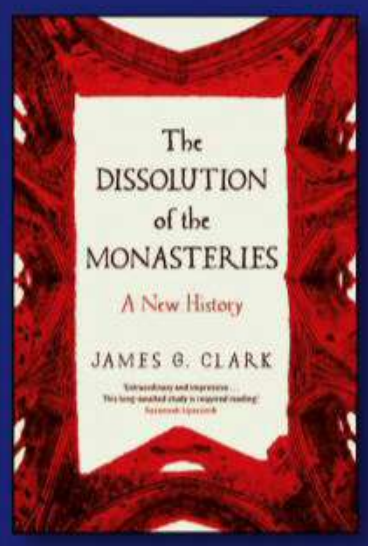

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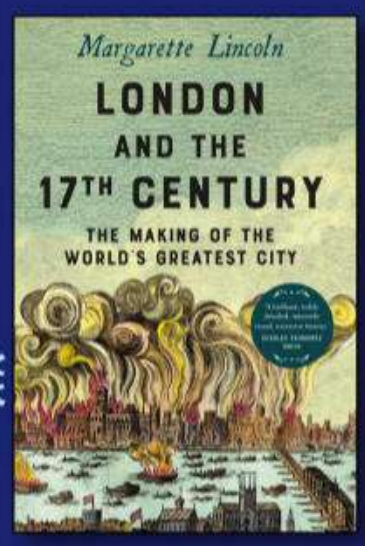

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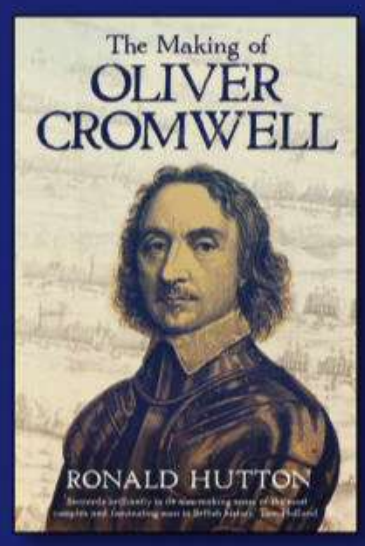

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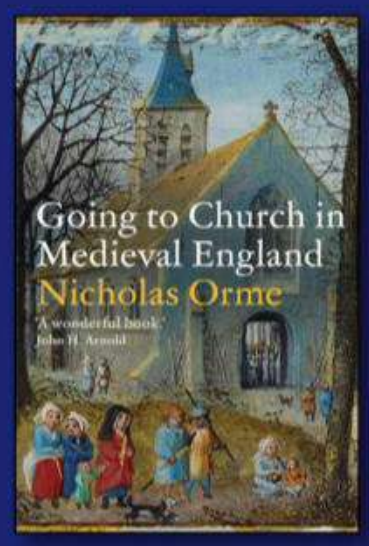

'Eye-opening...Orme deftly shows how church language became part of everyday English.'

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FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE

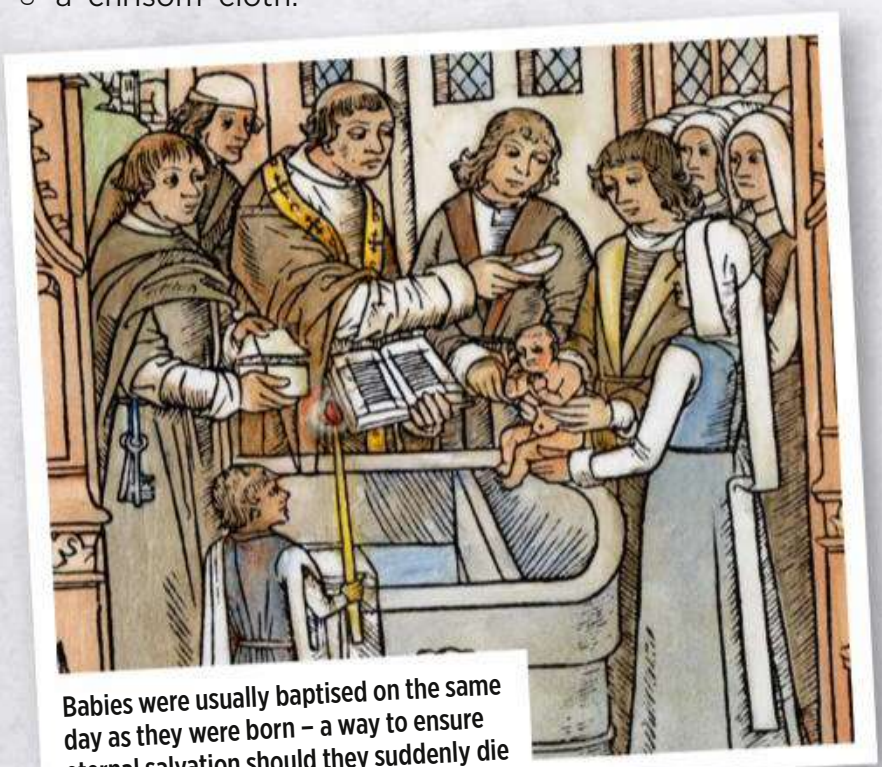
No matter who you were or where you came from, the Church was always there to mark life's big events

1. BAPTISM

The Church was a constant presence in medieval society, celebrating life's biggest events with blessings and rituals. Within hours of their first breath, babies were baptised into the Church, a rite that ensured eternal salvation should the infant die. "The first known infant baptism in England was that of Eanfled, daughter of King Edwin of Northumbria in AD 625," says Professor Nicholas Orme, author of *Going to Church in Medieval England*, "and by the 12th century, the ancient tradition of waiting until Easter Eve or Pentecost Eve to christen a new baby had been replaced by immediate baptism on the day of birth."

Baptisms were also naming ceremonies; a baby's forename would be announced at the beginning of the service by the senior godparent of the infant's gender, after whom, incidentally, the baby was usually named. "Baptism, like the services of churching and marriage (*see boxes 2 and 5*), was a rite of transition that brought the recipient from outside to inside the church," comments Orme. "Standing outside the church doors, the priest would perform a series of ritual actions, saying prayers and exorcisms to ensure the child was fit to enter the church. The outdoor part of the service is one of the main reasons church porches were built, to provide shelter from adverse weather."

Inside, the baptismal party would gather around the font where three godparents (two of the baby's gender and one of the opposite gender) would make their baptismal vows. The infant was then fully immersed, three times in consecrated water, and wrapped in a 'chrisom' cloth.



Babies were usually baptised on the same day as they were born – a way to ensure eternal salvation should they suddenly die

Women were considered unclean in the weeks after giving birth, and in need of 'purification'

2. CHURCHING

One notable person missing from medieval baptisms was the baby's mother. Jewish tradition regarded them as ritually unclean for several weeks after giving birth. The Christian Church modified this view but asked mothers to attend church after 40 days for 'purification' – a rite commonly known as 'churching'.

Carrying a candle, the new mother would wait outside the church doors, accompanied by two matrons and her midwife. After sprinkling her with holy water, the priest would lead her into the church, after which mass was celebrated. The chrisom cloth would also be returned and a monetary offering made.

"There was no formal ban on women entering church after giving birth, but it was a custom that was certainly encouraged, and one that the Virgin Mary is described as having followed in the New Testament," says Orme.

3. CONFIRMATION

Unlike the rites of baptism and churching, which took place at specific points in life, confirmation – performed by a bishop as the Church's official validation of a person's Christian status – could take place at any time.

"In the very early days of Christianity in England, when bishops travelled around as missionaries, it's likely that baptism and confirmation were performed at the same time," says Orme. "But by the 12th century, bishops were typically absent from their dioceses for considerable periods of time, making it harder for people to receive confirmation."

When a bishop could be found, the confirmation service itself was relatively straightforward. A sponsor for the child was enlisted (an adult of the same sex as the individual being confirmed) and all involved were required to fast beforehand. The bishop would anoint his thumb with chrism (holy oil) and make a cross on the individual's forehead, saying the required words. After their anointing, the newly confirmed child would tie a bandage around their head to keep the chrism in place and return to the church 3–8 days later to have their forehead washed in the font.

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4. COMMUNION

A 15th-century image (*above*) depicts a woman on a 'spiritual journey' from childhood to adulthood. Upon reaching maturity, parishioners were expected to receive bread, and initially wine, at communion (*right*)

"Although puberty was considered the point at which young people became fully involved in church duties, there was no formal ceremony to mark this transition from childhood to adulthood," comments Orme. "The likelihood is that upon reaching puberty, a parent, godparent or parish priest would suggest that an adolescent attend confession at Lent and receive communion."

From 1215, all adult parishioners were expected to receive communion at Easter and attend confession once a year. Communion itself took place after the priest had consecrated the bread and wine at mass – at which point both elements were believed to have become, in a physical sense, the actual body and blood of Christ. From the 12th century, however, the consecrated wine was withheld from the laity – partly to avoid sacrilegious spillages – while a towel was held beneath the chins of communicants to catch any crumbs that might fall as they received the consecrated bread in the form of a wafer.

Weddings could sometimes be grand occasions, with churches specially decorated for the purpose

5. WEDDINGS

Like baptism and churching, the marriage rite began outside the church doors with a public exchange of vows, made 'before God, the priest, and the people'. From 1200, three public announcements of marriage had to be made in church before a couple could wed – later known as 'banns' – and weddings were not permitted to take place during the three penitential periods of the year, which included Advent and Lent.

"It was common for churches to be decorated for weddings; there are records of fresh rushes being strewn on the floor, with special hangings and lights. But they could be expensive occasions, too: some churches had to keep a bridal veil or jewels that could be lent to those who could not afford to have them," comments Orme.

A fresco depicts Saint Francis of Assisi receiving confirmation from Pope Innocent III in 1210

6. DEATH

"If a parishioner was believed to be near death, a member of the clergy would be summoned so that psalms, intercessions and a litany of prayers for the soul could be said over the individual," explains Orme. "Distance and even negligence, though, could see churchmen fail to make it in time, and it was not uncommon for an individual to die without receiving confession or communion."

Deaths were marked with the ringing of the 'passing bell' at church – two rings for a woman, three for a man – and further prayers and psalms were said over the dead body, which would be washed and wrapped in a linen shroud. Later that day or the next, the body would be taken to church, accompanied by family and other acquaintances, where a funeral mass of requiem would be said before burial.

"Funerals could place a vast financial burden on poor parishioners," says Orme. "Despite a ban on charging for funerals, monetary offerings from those attending the requiem were expected, while the burial itself could be an expensive outlay.

"Conversely, funerals were also opportunities for some families to flaunt their wealth – from providing the clothes of those attending to paying huge sums for masses to be said for the deceased."

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN AND NICHOLAS ORME

Dying parishioners would be attended by a member of the clergy, with prayers said for their soul

MAKING THEIR MARK

The walls of some of England's oldest places of worship are covered with inscriptions and doodles. **Matthew J Champion** explains the significance of medieval church graffiti, and what we can learn about the lives of the people who created it

Compass-drawn designs, such as those shown above, are among the most common types of medieval church graffiti. Typically, these functioned as 'ritual protection marks', intended to ward off demons

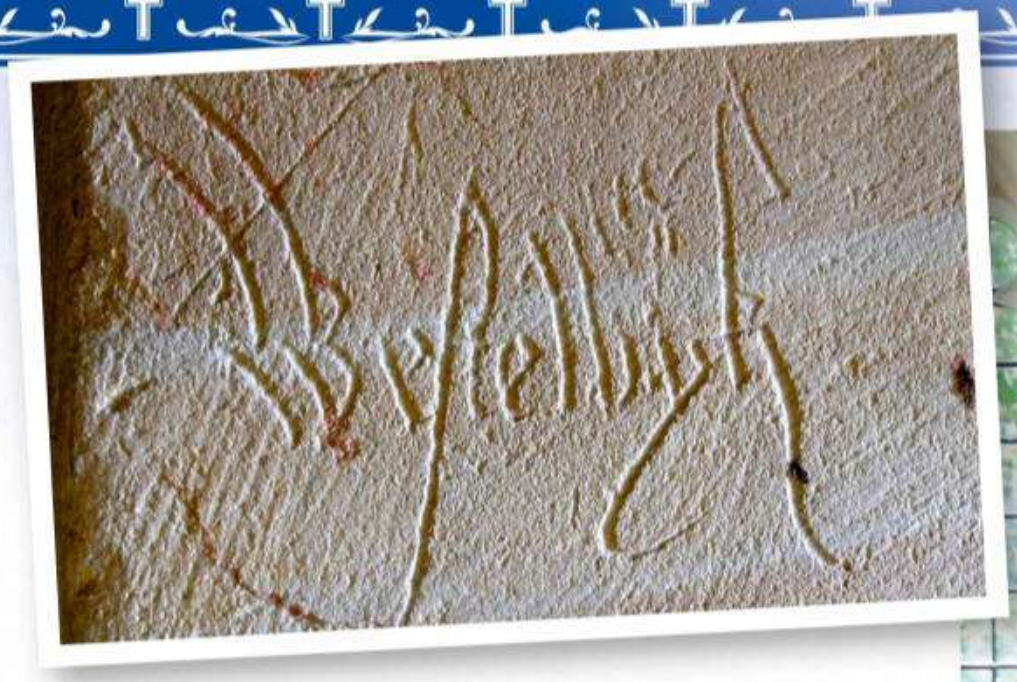
Today, graffiti is generally seen as both destructive and anti social, and certainly not something that should be either welcomed or encouraged in our parish churches. However, that attitude is a relatively modern one. During the Middle Ages, graffiti appears to have been both accepted and acceptable, leaving many of our medieval churches and cathedrals quite literally covered with inscriptions.

Generally speaking, most of these inscriptions had been largely overlooked except by a very small handful of academics and scholars, and are still often described simply as the creations of 'bored' choirboys; paradoxically in many cases long before there actually *were* any choirboys to be found in church. In recent years, however, new surveys of these early inscriptions have revived interest in medieval graffiti, and have seen it become the focus of intense study.

So the question must really be why study graffiti in the first place? The answer is actually a very straightforward one: if you walk into just about any one of the thousands of surviving medieval churches scattered across the English countryside, you will undoubtedly see a wealth of features surviving from the Middle Ages stained glass windows, the sheen of alabaster monuments and the dull glow of memorial brasses set in to the floor. However, almost without exception, all these survivals were created by or for the top five or 10 per cent of medieval society; the parish elite that could, quite simply, afford to have themselves memorialised.

Where, then, are the lower orders of medieval society? Where are the common folk who for generations worshipped within the church walls? Where are the memorials to the simple commoners who paid for, and in many cases actually helped construct, these monuments to their 'betters'?

Well, these individuals do turn up occasionally within legal agreements, wills and manor court rolls. However, in most cases these documents are atypical. Put simply, they represent times when



those individuals came into contact with the authority of either the civil administration or the Church, and they most certainly do not represent those peoples' everyday interactions with their church as either a building or an institution. Their voice has been muted and distorted by the conventions of the records themselves.

This, then, is what makes the study of early graffiti inscriptions both worthwhile and utterly fascinating. Unlike almost every other surviving record from the Middle Ages, the graffiti inscriptions have the potential to have been created by anyone and everyone; from the lord of the manor and parish priest all the way down the social scale to the very lowliest of commoner. They are, quite literally, the lost voices of the medieval Church.

ABOVE: **An elegantly inscribed piece of text discovered upside down, three metres up a pillar, at Ludham, Norfolk. It is thought to be the name of one of the parish's vicars**

RIGHT: **A modern reconstruction of how graffiti inscriptions would have originally appeared – scratched through the decorative pigment to reveal the pale stone beneath**

DECIPHERING DEMONS

Research into English medieval graffiti inscriptions has shown that, while there are a number of inscriptions that might be nothing more than the doodlings of bored choirboys, the vast majority of the inscriptions appear to be devotional or religious in nature. They are, in simple terms, prayers made solid in stone.

In some cases the inscriptions are literally that – Latin prayers that wouldn't be out of place in a traditional church service, etched deep into the stonework; prayers for the safe return of long overdue ships or for a good harvest, and prayers for the souls of a dearly departed member of the family.

Others are less easy to decipher. Ritual protection marks, commonly mis-referred to as 'witch marks', designed to ward off demons and the ever-present 'evil eye', clustered around medieval fonts. Elaborate crosses cut deep into the arches of doorways in memory of vows undertaken, or asking for God's blessing upon a new and perhaps hazardous undertaking. Medieval ships complete with crew members still sailing across the stonework after many long centuries, and images of demons pinned to the walls for evermore by deeply etched pentangles and 'demon traps'.

Church graffiti didn't cease with the English Reformation, as these 17th-century inscriptions found in Sedgeford, Norfolk, show

ABOVE: **The image of a demon found at St Mary's Church in Troston, Suffolk. A pentangle has been scratched over its head – trapping the 'evil' within**

RIGHT: **Another demon found inside the same church – alongside the outline of a medieval shoe**

"THE TIME TAKEN TO CREATE THESE DESIGNS SUGGESTS THEY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITHOUT THE CHURCH'S KNOWLEDGE"

The church was one of the focal points of medieval communities, and as such, the ageing inscriptions found on their walls can tell us about the everyday lives of ordinary people

The walls of our medieval churches are full of minute testaments to faith and belief that were once commonplace. They tell the stories of life, love, hope and fear within the English medieval parish; a record that depicts sudden death and the perils of the soul that, every day, faced our ancestors. Most of all, though, these scratched mementoes by the long dead tell us about *people*.

EAST ANGLIAN INTRIGUE

A single church, such as that of St Mary's at Troston in Suffolk, can hold many hundreds of early inscriptions, ranging from the mundane to the seriously outlandish. On the tower arch sit elaborate compass drawn designs dating back to the time when the church was first built and consecrated by the bishop. A little further up the stonework is the name 'Johed Abthorp' (John Abthorpe), lord of the manor in the second half of the 15th century.

On the opposite side of the arch, which is now badly decayed by centuries of wear and damp, are a long series of dates from the turbulent time of the Civil Wars. Just below them are the sadly defaced outlines of two medieval ships; prayers, perhaps, for safe voyages undertaken by local churchgoers. The eastern end of the church is covered in even more graffiti, while the north side of the chancel arch is so densely covered with inscriptions that it is difficult to identify individual designs. Only two or three things can be made out; a man in late medieval costume is shown with his hands raised in prayer, an outline of a medieval shoe and the medieval text inscription that simply reads *Deo* (God).

On the south side of the chancel arch the graffiti takes a sinister bent. Just below a beautifully executed medieval coat-of-arms can be seen another outline of a medieval shoe. However, this time scrawled alongside it, and partly obscuring it, is a small head of a demon. Admittedly, demon imagery was common in the medieval church, with colourful and grotesque examples often found casting the souls of the damned down into the pit of hell on the surviving doom paintings that can still be seen above many chancel arches. However, the number of graffiti examples here is noteworthy.

Higher up the arch is a second demon inscription, this time shown in profile with a gaping mouth full of sharpened teeth and its tongue lolling out. Across the demon's head is a pentangle, scored deeply into the stonework suggesting that it was gone over time and time again. The pentangle, originally a Christian symbol of protection, sits exactly within the confines of the demon's head – quite literally pinning it to the wall and trapping the 'evil' within.

Such symbolism as that found at St Mary's at Troston clearly had meaning for the individuals who created these images, and many of the more elaborate examples would have taken several hours to execute. The length of time taken to create these designs does rather suggest that they couldn't have been carried out without the full knowledge of the local church itself – and with at least their tacit approval.

Some are clearly devotional in nature, such as the praying male figure, but we may never truly understand the reasons why the lord of the manor left his name inscribed in the tower arch. Was he simply recording his presence, or perhaps marking what he considered to

THE NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK MEDIEVAL GRAFFITI SURVEY X4, ALAMY X2

Parishioners who perished during outbreaks of infectious disease, such as sweating sickness, were frequently memorialised on church walls

be his territory? Was it John Abthorpe himself who carved the name into the stonework, or was it created by another person with a deeper, darker purpose?

I have come across a number of other inscriptions that are far less enigmatic, and whose meaning it is all too easy to understand. At Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire, for example, a tiny inscription in the north aisle reads simply *Hic est sedes margaratea vit an d(ecimo)* (Here lies Margaret in her 10th year).

IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

A few miles away at Kingston (also Cambridgeshire), a discreet inscription appears to tell of an even more tragic tale. There, cut neatly into the stonework, are three names – Cateryn Maddyngley, Jane Maddyngley and Amee Maddyngley. Exactly how old they were we will probably never know, but the fact they don't turn up as adults in the parish records rather suggests that all three were children or infants; all three related by blood. However, if the rest of the brief inscription is to be believed, the one thing we do know is that all three died in the same year – 1515. For most of England it wasn't a particularly significant year, unless you happened to live in either London, the southeast or Cambridgeshire. In these areas, throughout the summer months, an old adversary returned: the bubonic plague.

Although the plague was usually a little less deadly than the sweating sickness (which could see you hale and hearty at lunchtime, but dead before supper), and had a higher recovery rate, this outbreak appears to have been particularly virulent. Cambridge University (and possibly Oxford) suspended all studies, and the courts and places of gathering were disbanded in an effort to stop its spread – but to little avail.

Part of the problem was that this outbreak came only a short time after the last major outbreak of the 'sweats' in 1507. As was typical of the period, the years immediately after a major epidemic usually saw an increased birth rate, as families and communities tried to make good the losses of the previous pestilence. However, in the case of the 1515 epidemic, all this meant was that when the plague began to ravage its way across England, the country had a far higher proportion of infants than it might ordinarily have had – and it was these children who appear to have fallen victim to the disease in their hundreds and thousands.

ABOVE LEFT: **The names of three children cut into the stonework of the parish church at Kingston, Cambs. They were likely victims of plague in the early 16th century**

ABOVE RIGHT: **A late-medieval ship inscription at Norwich Cathedral, depicting a merchant vessel with its sails furled**

Across southeast England, infants were buried hastily in unmarked graves, with little or no time to memorialise or remember them. In London, the hasty funeral processions, made up of only a few souls, walked the deserted streets; and in Kingston, a small village in rural Cambridgeshire, a stolid tenant farmer quietly etched the names of his three dead children into the walls of the parish church. That simple inscription may well be the only mark those three young individuals left on this planet. Sometimes, the writing on the walls can break your heart.

MATTHEW J CHAMPION is an archaeologist, historian and the project director of the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey (*medieval-graffiti.co.uk*). His books include *Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England's Churches* (Ebury Press, 2015)

HOW TO GO ON A MEDIEVAL PILGRIMAGE

Are you a medieval worshipper looking to demonstrate the strength of your devotion? A pilgrimage could be the answer – and we have the ultimate guide to planning your trip...

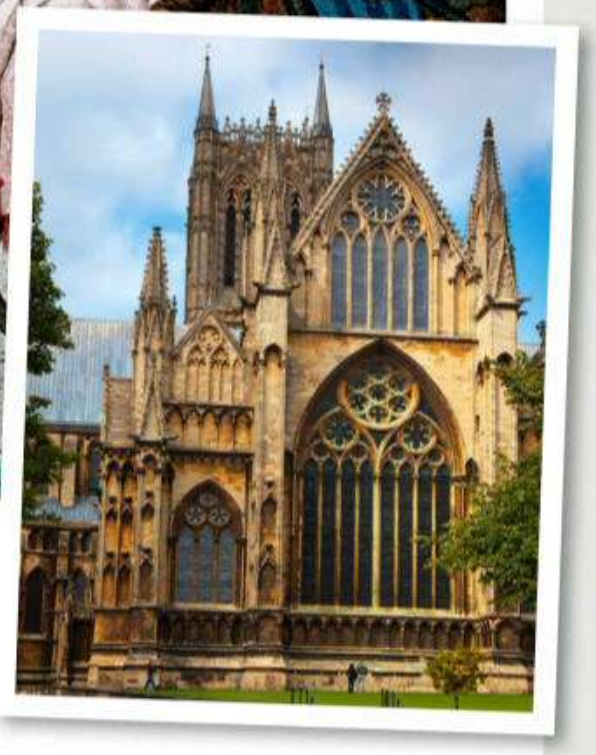
WHERE TO GO

There are many reasons for going on pilgrimage. You may wish to undertake the journey to show your religious devotion. You may be doing penance for sins you've committed. You may wish to be cured of a serious medical condition or illness, or to gain a cure for someone else. You may wish to make a political protest: to visit the tombs of Simon de Montfort or King Henry VI, because you supported their causes. Or you may just be in need of a holiday and a little adventure.

But pilgrimages cost time and money. Most people cannot spend long away from their work, their children or their farm animals. Going a great distance means either walking, which is wearying; travelling in a carrier's cart for which you have to pay; or riding a horse, which you must own or hire. Then how are you to find food or a bed? You can beg, which is hazardous, or you may be able to stay in a monastery, but often the only alternatives will be inns or private houses charging money.

This means that, for most people, pilgrimage is a local matter. You go out for the day, often with friends and neighbours, to visit a nearby abbey, church or chapel. You take a picnic and get home by nightfall. Long pilgrimages to the most famous shrines are chiefly made by the wealthy, who can afford to take time off and have money to spend, or by very devout poor people who support themselves as best they can along the way.

Local pilgrimage places are innumerable. Many churches have images of Christ or the Virgin Mary, which are reckoned to be especially holy and where your prayer may be answered. Small chapels are also popular, usually on their festival day once a year, especially ones in romantic places such as hilltops, woods or caves. If you have the means to travel further, there is also a wide choice of places to go. Canterbury Cathedral, with the shrine of Thomas Becket, canonised in 1173, is the most famous and busiest shrine of all, attracting pilgrims from all over Britain and from the Continent. Other notable churches to visit are Walsingham in Norfolk, which has a copy of the Virgin Mary's house at Nazareth and is a shrine in her honour, and Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire, which possesses some of the blood of Christ in a crystal phial. Of course, anyone lucky enough to live close to these places can easily visit them in a single day.



ABOVE: **Pilgrims depicted making their way to Canterbury – the busiest holy site in medieval England**

RIGHT: **Lincoln Cathedral, another popular destination, was once the tallest building on Earth**

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X4

A stained-glass window in Canterbury Cathedral depicts worshippers visiting the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket

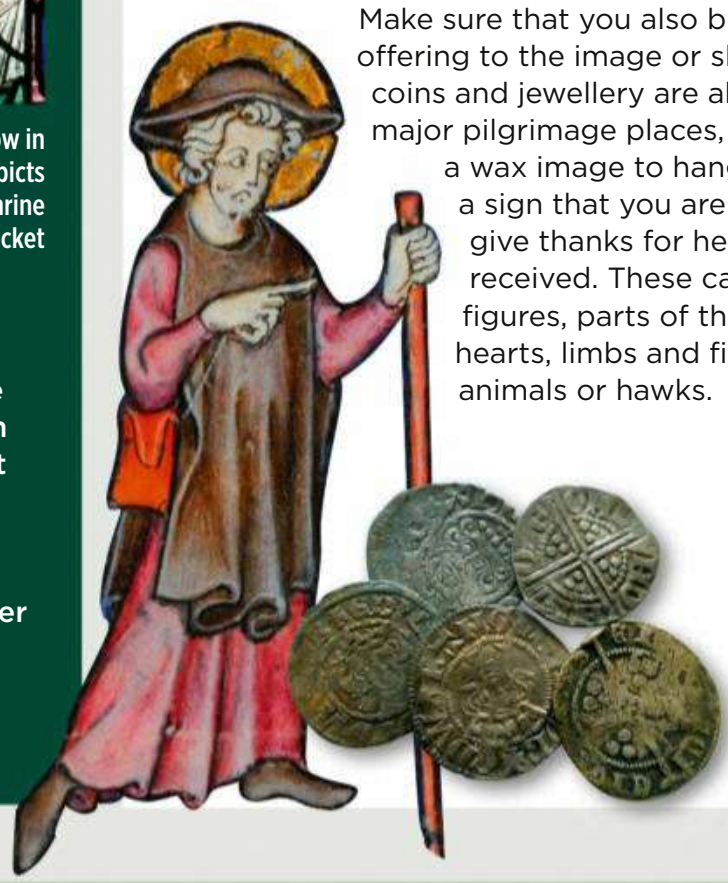
WHEN TO GO

Scheduling your pilgrimage properly will be crucial to your enjoyment of the whole experience. The best time to go is from after Easter until the autumn. This is when the weather is better, the roads are drier and (except at harvest times) there is less work to do on the land. But you do not have to make a pilgrimage the whole point of your travel. If you are going on business, even to a market in a nearby town, or if you are a wealthy member of the aristocracy, moving from manor to manor or to London, this will allow you to call in at churches with an image or a shrine, on the way or at your destination. A pilgrimage can be part of a journey for other reasons.

WHAT TO BRING

For your time on the road, you may dress in normal clothes suitable for travelling (Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims were dressed in this way). Some pilgrims, chiefly men, wear a special outfit, but this is not compulsory. It consists of a wooden staff for support (and for warding off hostile dogs), a wide-brimmed hat to protect you from sun and rain, and a bag in which to carry your provisions.

Make sure that you also bring or buy an offering to the image or shrine. Candles, coins and jewellery are all acceptable. At the major pilgrimage places, you may purchase a wax image to hang up at the shrine as a sign that you are asking for help, or to give thanks for help you have already received. These can include little human figures, parts of the body such as hearts, limbs and fingers, or images of animals or hawks.



LEFT: **Hammered coins, such as those shown here, would have been brought as offerings to shrines**

FAR LEFT: **Making long journeys over tricky terrain meant a staff would have been a key piece of kit**

A mural shows the characters of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* travelling on horseback, although many pilgrims actually made their journeys on foot

HOW TO TRAVEL AND WHERE TO STAY

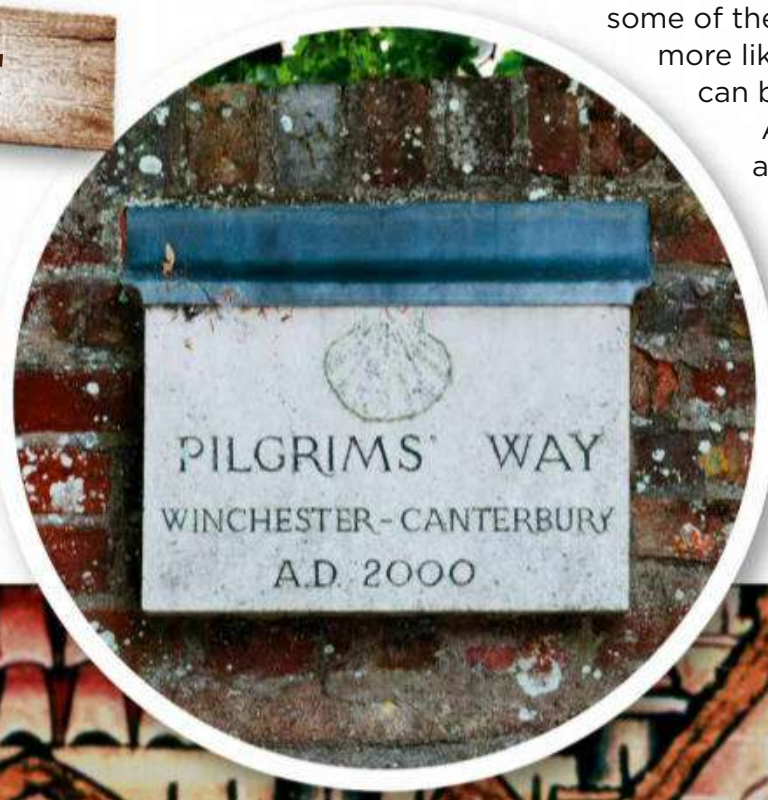
It is more pleasant to travel in company than alone. On a short pilgrimage you may go as a church group, and on a longer one, you are likely to find other people on the roads whom you can join. Indeed, Chaucer describes pilgrims from different parts of England – including Devon, Norfolk and Oxford – meeting in Southwark, across the Thames from London, and forming a party to go to Canterbury.

You will mostly travel by the ordinary roads rather than by special pilgrim ways. The main roads have inns and shops to buy food, and they are safer as long as you go in a group.

You can stay briefly in a monastic almonry, where you may be able to secure basic food and lodging. Monasteries, by the later Middle Ages, however, are tending to build inns for this purpose, and these inns will probably charge for staying, as other inns do. Private houses are likely to take in travellers, but there too some payment will be expected.

The best time to arrive is the early morning, so that you can attend mass in the church. After that, you will visit the main image or shrine that you have come to see, and there you will make your offering, and pray for your needs. The church may have other relics to show you: when the scholar Erasmus visits Walsingham in 1512, he is shown a bone of Saint Peter and some of the breast milk of the Virgin Mary. But relics are more likely to be brought out for wealthy pilgrims who can be expected to make generous offerings.

After visiting the shrine, you may wish to buy a souvenir in the form of a lead or pewter badge to wear on your hat. At Canterbury you can also purchase a small lead phial of water that has been in contact with a drop of the blood of Saint Thomas. This may be taken home and kept for veneration, or for drinking during a serious illness.



A marker erected in the village of Chevening, Kent, commemorating one of England's most popular pilgrim routes

ABOVE: **Pilgrims with modest funds could bed down inside a monastery – a much safer, and undoubtedly drier, option than sleeping under the stars**

LEFT: **Bread and ale would have provided sustenance to those recovering from exhausting journeys**

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X9

Not everyone will approve of you going on pilgrimage. Some images are claimed to have powers that the Church does not endorse, and a few bishops have expressly forbade people from venerating them.

A series of writers have also criticised pilgrimage. They include Chaucer's contemporary, William Langland (the author of the poem *Piers Plowman*); the followers of John Wycliffe (died 1384), known as the Lollards; and Erasmus in the early 16th century. These men question the superstitions associated with some pilgrim places, and think that human life is the only pilgrimage that God asks us to follow. Instead, people should stay at home, work, go to their local church, and give money to the poor rather than shrines and images.

If you ignore these views and still wish to go, just make sure that you do so before 1538, because in that year Henry VIII will ban the practice altogether!

ABOVE: **Metal badges, such as this one depicting the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket, would have been worn as a cherished souvenir of a pilgrim's travels**

RIGHT: **Another badge, depicting Becket himself**

FOUR OTHER PLACES TO GO ON PILGRIMAGE

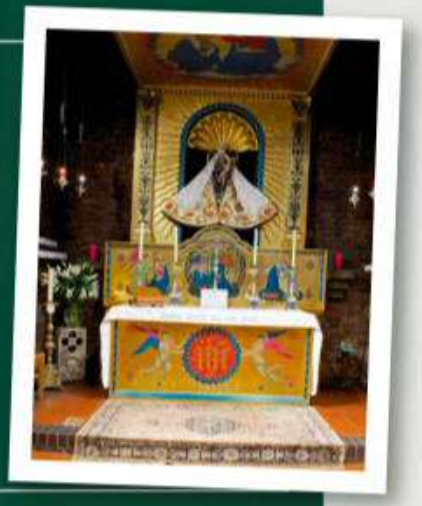
Don't fancy Canterbury? Here are some more holy sites for your consideration…

DURHAM CATHEDRAL

▲ The relics of Saint Cuthbert ended up here in AD 995, having not had a permanent home after the Vikings' sacking of Lindisfarne more than two centuries earlier. The relics were the primary reason for pilgrims to visit Durham, especially after they were placed in the new cathedral in the early 12th century.

THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM

▶ Located in the Norfolk village of Walsingham, this popular shrine was established in 1061 by a noblewoman who had a vision of the Virgin Mary asking her to build a replica of the house at Nazareth in which she brought up Jesus.

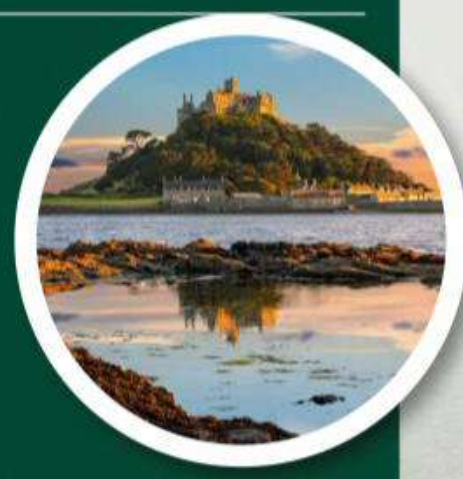


ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

◀ The shrine to Saint Alban, a Christian martyr who died at the hands of the Romans (possibly around AD 304), was visited by pilgrims from the fifth century onwards. The Venerable Bede would later describe it as a place where "there ceases not to this day the miraculous cures of many sick persons, and the frequent working of wonders".

ST MICHAEL'S MOUNT

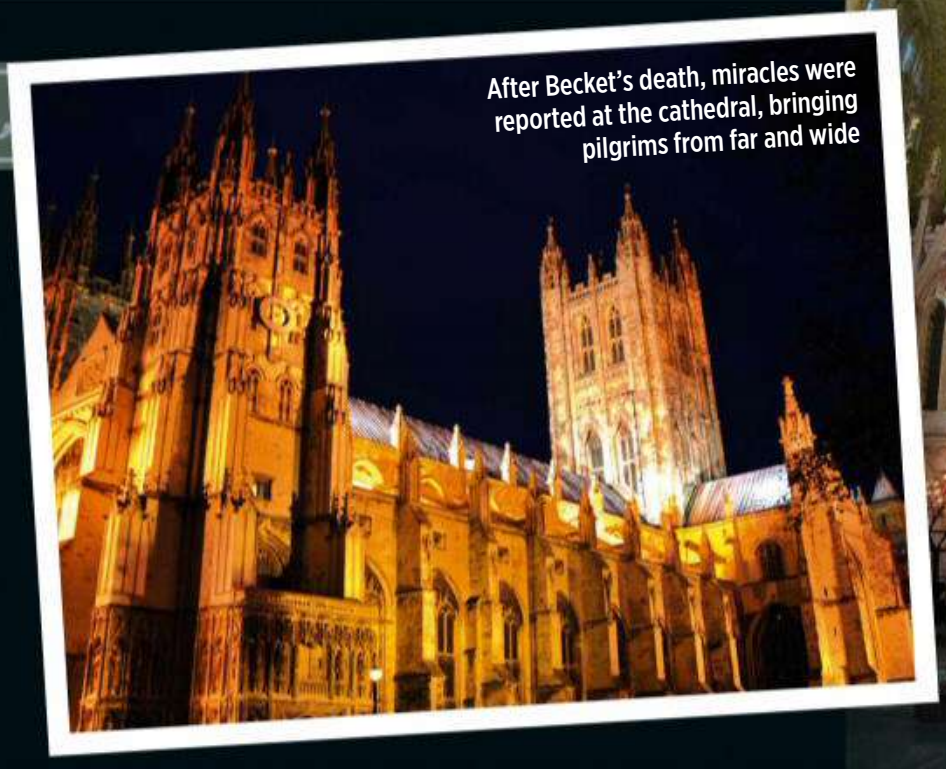
▶ The saint's chief shrine in Britain attracted some pilgrims from far away (it seems to have been regarded as Land's End is today), but it was especially popular as a local place of pilgrimage for Cornish people, most of whom could visit on a short journey. ⊙



WORDS: NIGE TASSELL AND NICHOLAS ORME

ENGLAND IN STONE

Despite its age, Canterbury Cathedral remains a beating heart of Christianity



After Becket's death, miracles were reported at the cathedral, bringing pilgrims from far and wide

The mother church of the Church of England and the wider Anglican Communion, Canterbury Cathedral has been an important centre of Christianity for more than 1,400 years. However, little remains of the original cathedral, which lies beneath the nave of the present building, or of the Norman cathedral erected shortly after the Conquest. In fact, today's impressive edifice is the amalgamation of some 900 years of building and rebuilding since 1070.

But aside from its impressive architecture, the cathedral is also known for being the site of a particularly brutal murder.

In 1162, Henry II's close friend and chancellor, Thomas Becket, was appointed archbishop of Canterbury the most senior bishop role in the Church of England. By giving Becket such an important promotion, the king hoped he would support his future plans.

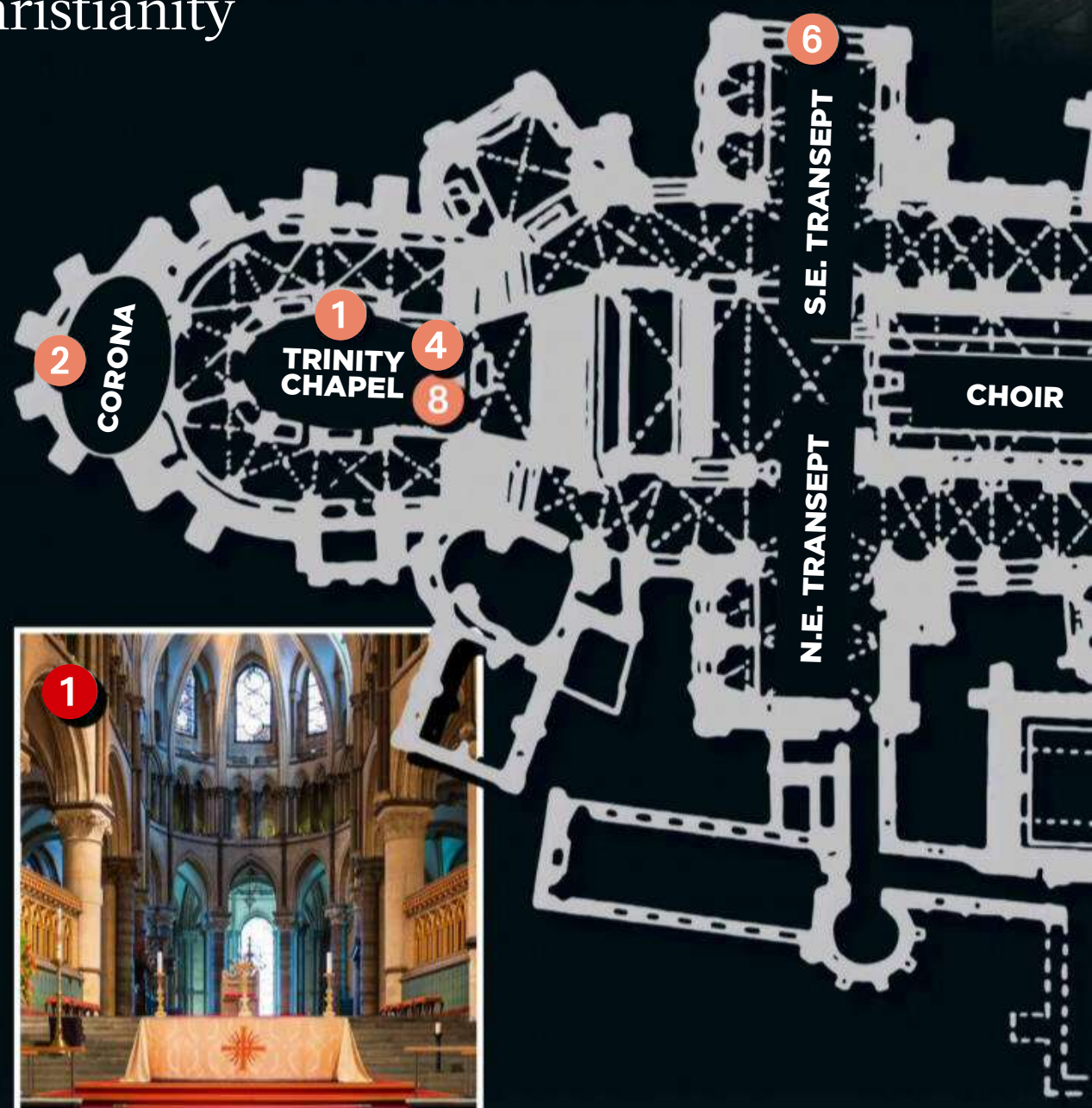
However, relations between the pair began to sour when, in 1164, Henry attempted to introduce a set of laws that would give the Crown more power and influence over the Church. When Becket refused to accept the changes, the king tried to put him on trial, causing the archbishop to flee to France. Making the most of Becket's absence, Henry had his son also named Henry crowned by the Archbishop of York as a junior king to ensure his succession. After an intervention by Pope Alexander III, Henry and Becket managed to resolve some of their differences, and Becket returned home but not before writing a letter excommunicating the bishops involved in the coronation.

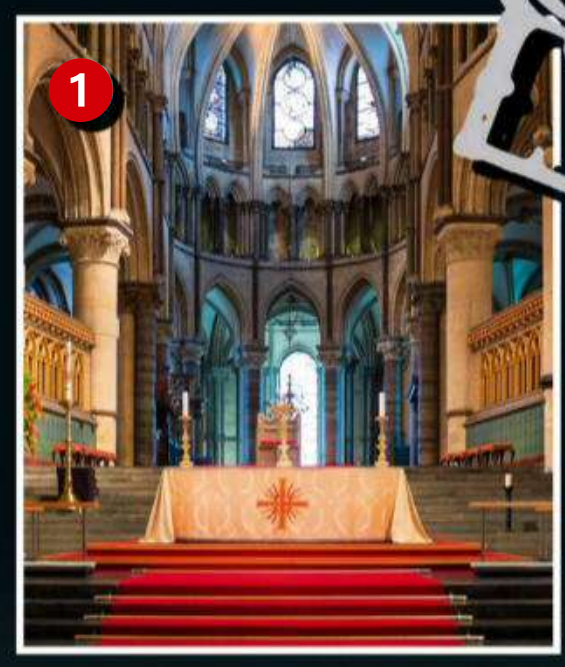
Precisely what happened next is still the cause of some debate. Upon discovering Becket's actions, a furious Henry is said to have cried out "Why am I troubled by this low born priest?", leading four over zealous knights to set off for Canterbury. Trying to force him to come to terms, tempers boiled over and on 29 December 1170 the knights hacked Becket to death in the northwest transept.

Henry claimed that he never intended Becket to be killed, but he nevertheless performed public penance, allowing himself to be whipped as he prayed for forgiveness. Becket, meanwhile, was declared a martyr and canonised in 1173.

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X5

A stained-glass panel depicts Becket's slaying





WHAT TO SEE

1 **TRINITY CHAPEL** Originally the site of Becket's tomb, this now houses the remains of Edward, the Black Prince

2 **CORONA CHAPEL** Named after the severed crown of Thomas Becket, this forms the cathedral's east end

3 **THE MARTYRDOM** The exact spot where Becket was killed can be viewed inside the northwest transept

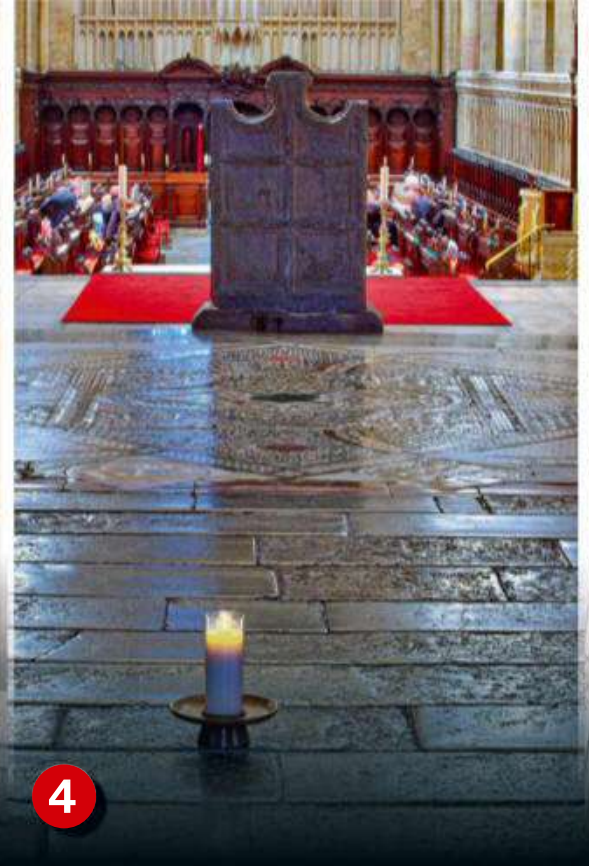
4 **SHRINE** A lit candle shows where Becket's shrine once stood before it was destroyed during the Reformation

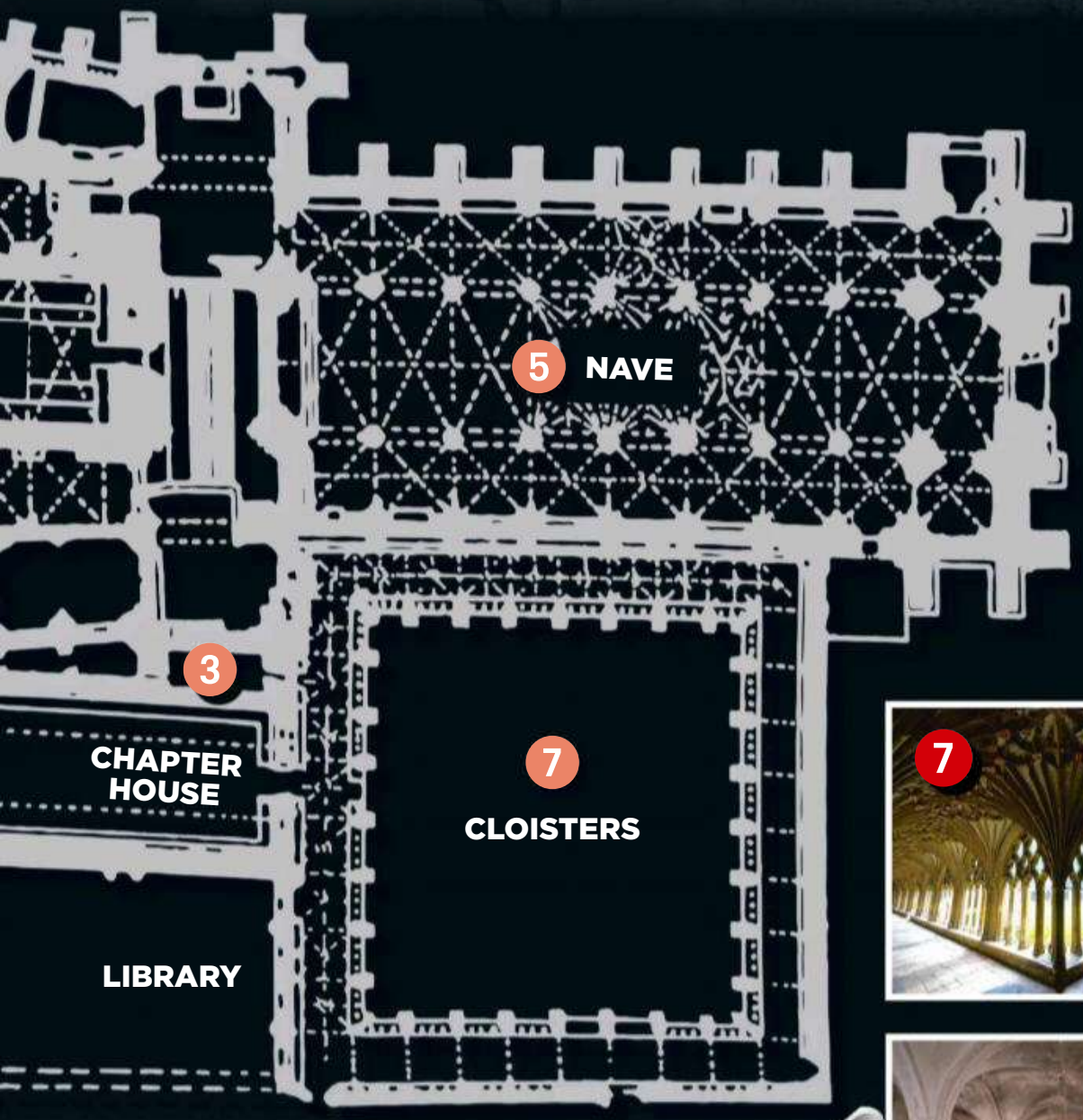
5 **NAVE** The cathedral's central section was rebuilt in the late 14th century and contains one of its oldest stained-glass windows, depicting the biblical Adam

6 **GREAT SOUTH WINDOW** This contains the 12th-century Ancestors of Christ stained-glass windows

7 **CLOISTERS** The centre of monastic life at Canterbury

8 **CRYPT** Dating back to the 11th century, this is the oldest surviving part of the cathedral





BIG NUMBERS

100,000

No fewer than 100,000 pilgrims are said to have visited Canterbury in 1420, the fifth 50-year 'jubilee' of Becket's martyrdom

3,600

The number of fire bombs dropped on Canterbury by the German Luftwaffe on one day in 1942

3

The number of archbishops of Canterbury who have been murdered: Alphege, Thomas Becket and Simon of Sudbury

1,200

More than 1,200 square metres of stained glass fill the cathedral's huge windows

A cathedral through time

AD 597

Saint Augustine arrives in Kent as a Christian missionary on the orders of Pope Gregory the Great. He establishes the original Canterbury Cathedral and becomes the first archbishop of Canterbury.

1077

The Norman stone cathedral is completed under the orders of Archbishop Lanfranc.

1174

A devastating fire tears through the building, melting the lead roof and causing widespread damage. Rebuilding the cathedral will take 10 years.

1220

The cathedral becomes an important site of medieval pilgrimage when Thomas Becket's body is placed in its shrine.

1498

The 250-foot Bell Harry Tower is completed – the last major addition to the cathedral.

1538–40

On the orders of Henry VIII, Becket's shrine is destroyed and the monastery dissolved.

1660–1704

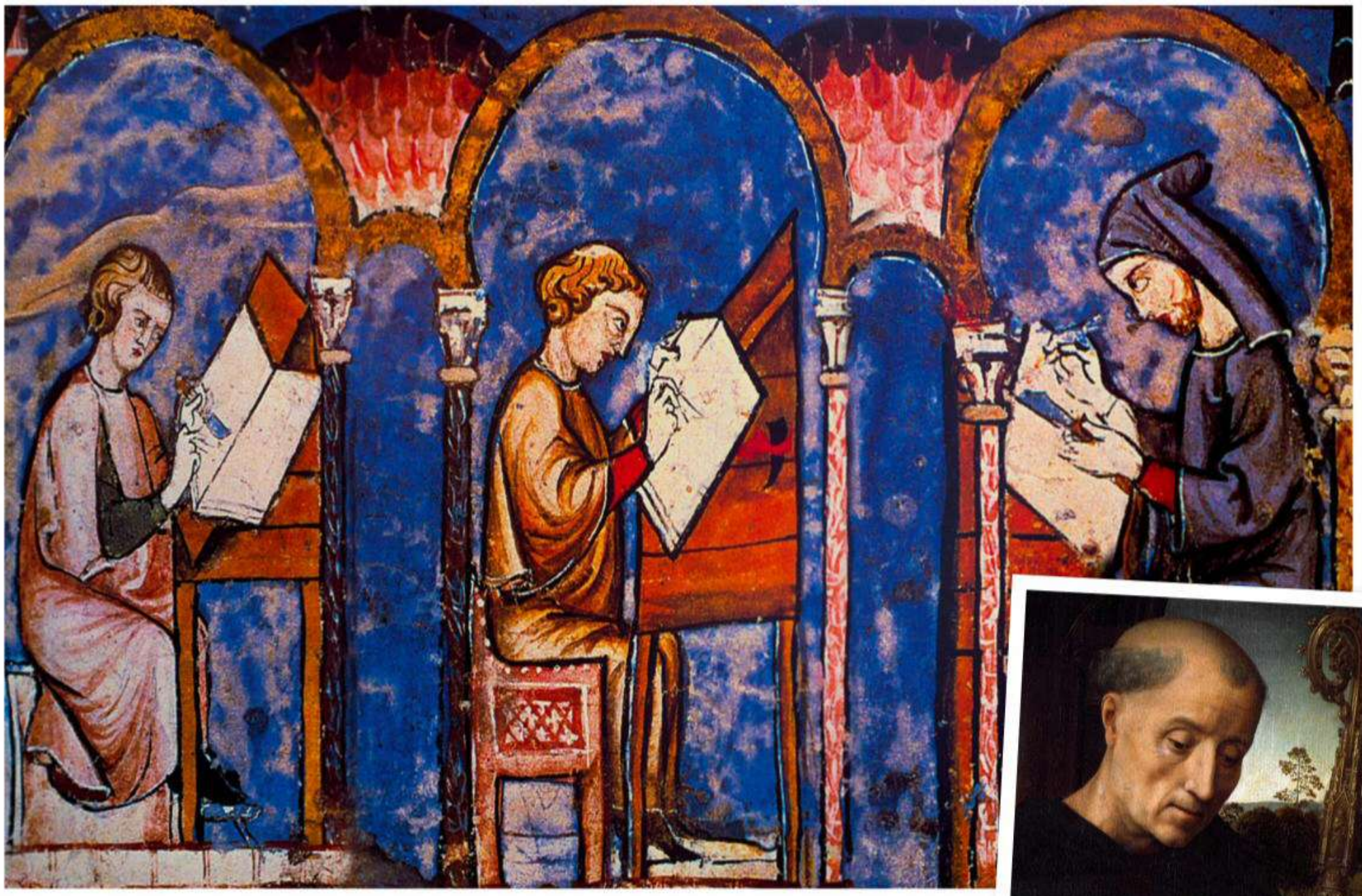
The cathedral undergoes repair work after being damaged by Puritans during the Civil Wars. Many of the medieval stained-glass windows are smashed.

1954

The cathedral's library is rebuilt after being damaged in a World War II bombing raid.

LIVES OF DEVOTION

From the Benedictines to the Carthusians, the religious orders of mainland Europe gradually wove themselves into the spiritual and social fabric of medieval England



ABOVE: **A 13th-century image shows monks writing manuscripts. Throughout medieval Europe, pious men – and women – devoted themselves to God**

RIGHT: **Saint Benedict of Nursia (c480–c547) lent his name to one of the most powerful religious movements of the Middle Ages**

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

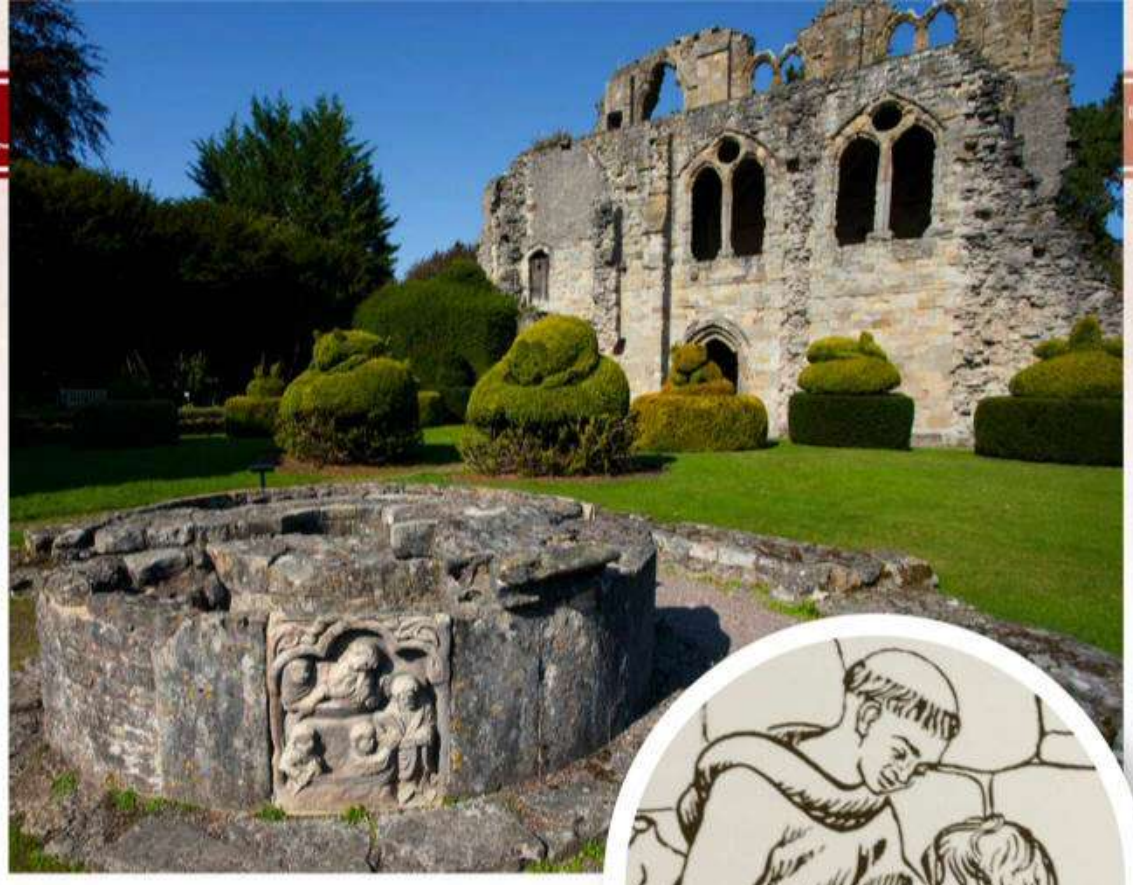
It is the early sixth century AD and Christianity is well on its way to establishing itself as the dominant religion across the former western Roman empire. Yet not everyone, it seems, is adhering to Jesus' teachings. In fact, so appalled is one man by the people of Rome's licentiousness – their preference for wine, women and song over abstinence, piety and prayer – that he decides to live as a hermit inside a cave some 40 miles east of what once was the imperial capital.

That man is known today as Saint Benedict of Nursia, and the plan he hatched while living in isolation in the foothills of central Italy 1,500 years ago would change the course of history.

In his *Dialogues*, written in the late sixth century, Pope Gregory I wrote that Benedict's "age was inferior to his virtue: all vain pleasure he condemned." And such was Benedict's disdain for "vain pleasure" that he came up with an idea for a religious order that would show an almost fanatical devotion to self-denial, prayer and hard work.

Benedict may have chosen to live in a cave, but he wasn't totally solitary. Soon, he had attracted a small band of disciples, whom he commanded to establish 12 monasteries, each with 12 monks. Within a few years, some of the most powerful men in Rome were offering up their sons to become monks under Benedict's care. By the late sixth century, this network of 'Benedictine' monasteries was well on the way to becoming the foremost religious movement across western Europe.

Such was the power of the Benedictine revolution that it was only a matter of time before it would cross the water to England. And that's exactly what happened in AD 597 when Saint Augustine made landfall in Kent and



ABOVE: **The ruins of the 12th-century Wenlock Priory in Shropshire – built on the site of an earlier Benedictine monastery founded in AD 680**

RIGHT: **Medieval monks also ran hospitals, where they could help support people's medical and spiritual needs**

founded Canterbury Abbey the following year with a brief to spread the word of God among the Anglo-Saxons. It was a slow and stuttering process, but they would go on to replicate across England what they had already achieved in mainland Europe. From Thetford in Norfolk and Wenlock in Shropshire to Finchdale just outside Durham, they would eventually become an integral part of the nation's social and religious fabric.

So what was the secret of the Benedictines' success? Why did the brainchild of a little-known hermit in sixth-century Italy prove such a powerful force in medieval England? Part of the reason was that Benedictine monasteries didn't just embed themselves in medieval communities, they also gave back to them, providing alms to the poor, medical aid to the sick, homes to the aged and shelter for travellers.

But what really made them stand out in a world beset by earthly temptations was the strictly defined list of rules that Saint Benedict devised for the monks that populated his monasteries.

"Idleness is the enemy of the soul," Benedict had declared. "Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labour as well as for prayerful reading... When they live by the labour of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks."

Ora et labora (prayer and work) was the Benedictine motto, and that was very much reflected in the monks' daily routine. A monk's day typically consisted of eight religious services (including one in the middle of the night), five hours of manual labour (such as domestic work, craft work and tending the monastery's gardens and crops), four hours reading of the Scriptures – and very little sleep.

To enter the Benedictine life was very much to leave the temptations of the secular world behind: monks had to take vows of chastity, renounce all their worldly goods and, often, survive on one meal a day – typically a porridge-like broth made up of ground bread, hot water, herbs, fish and vegetables. And, for much of the time, silence reigned supreme: monks were often not allowed to speak at all in the church, kitchen, refectory or dormitories.

LED INTO TEMPTATION

To the 21st-century ear, it sounds like a harsh existence, but there was rarely a shortage of recruits willing to enter religious orders. The reasons that young men sought a life under vows varied according to their backgrounds. Sons of the aristocracy were sometimes encouraged to join the church in order to carve out a successful career. For those from less-exalted backgrounds, the attraction of entering a monastery could be more modest: the promise of a regular meal – a bonus in a society regularly haunted by the spectre of famine. But, above all, in a deeply devout age, joining a religious order offered the opportunity to partake in the glory of God.

But, unfortunately, some people couldn't resist also partaking of the glories of the flesh. In fact, by the late Middle Ages, so many were indulging in ungodly behaviour that the religious authorities instituted a series of "visitations" of England's priories and monasteries to weed out offenders. And offenders is exactly what they discovered when they visited Canons Ashby Priory in Northamptonshire in the 1430s. Here the inspectors found that the ▶

AN ISOLATED EXISTENCE

Many medieval women also chose to follow lives of poverty and prayer – but few took it to greater extremes than the anchorites

Joining a religious order was far from a male-only pursuit. Legend has it that Saint Benedict of Nursia had a twin sister called Scholastica, who founded the first convent of Benedictine nuns near Monte Cassino in the sixth century AD.

Whether that tradition is true or not, nunneries were soon to become an established part of the medieval landscape. Just like their male counterparts, nuns were required to take vows of chastity and to renounce all worldly pleasures. It was an austere way of life but, on the scale of ferocious self-denial in the service of God, it wasn't a patch on the anchorites.

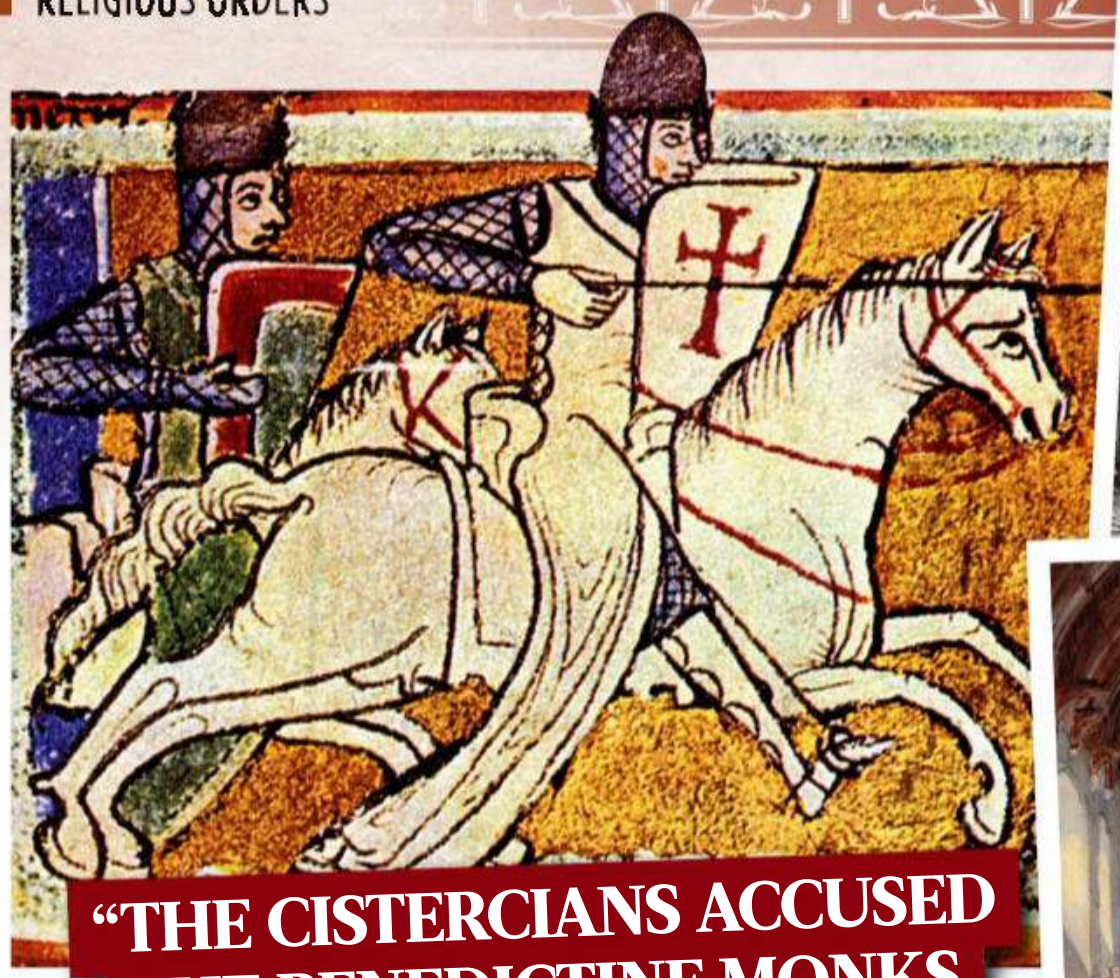
The word 'anchorite' comes from the Greek *anachōrein,* meaning 'to retire or withdraw'. Anchorites (the majority of whom were women) gave up their lives to be walled up in a cell until death. They would be witnesses at their own funerals, receiving the last rites, and have the door to their room sealed or bricked up.

The earliest recorded anchorites in England date to the 11th century, but in terms of numbers (around 200), they reached their height in the 13th century. Notable anchorites include Christine Carpenter, who was released from her cell in Shere church, Surrey, but missed isolation so much that, in 1332, she was given permission to be re-enclosed.

However, perhaps the most famous English anchorite was a woman with a man's name: Julian of Norwich. Born in c1342, Julian was walled up in the East Anglian city at some point in the late 14th century. Like all anchorites, Julian would have dedicated her time to intense prayer and contemplation. Yet during her decades of total isolation, she did something even more extraordinary: she became the first woman to write a book in English.

That book, *Revelations of Divine Love* – in which Julian describes a series of mystical visions she experienced in earlier life – has been described as a stunning literary achievement. That's quite an accomplishment for a woman who would never meet any of her readers.

Six centuries after her death, the writings of anchorite Julian of Norwich are still heralded as a landmark achievement in women's literature



ABOVE: **Not all monks were well-behaved, with some succumbing to the vices of alcohol and sexual impropriety – as shown by this fanciful illustration**

FAR LEFT: **The Knights Templar helped protect Christians on pilgrimage throughout Europe and the Holy Land**

"THE CISTERCIANS ACCUSED THE BENEDICTINE MONKS OF EATING TOO MUCH, AND TOO WELL"

inhabitants were not only indulging in private feasting and games, frequenting the village inn and skipping services in the choir, but also wearing "short aild tight doublets with several ties to their hose" instead of their monastic habit.

There was an even more shocking and scandalous outbreak of bad behaviour uncovered in the abbey of Missenden in Buckinghamshire in 1531. A local canon, Roger Palmer, found himself accused of carnal relations with a married woman, Margaret Bishop – before promptly alleging that it was Missenden's abbot, John Fox, who had shared Margaret's bed. The whole messy business was resolved when Palmer was imprisoned and Abbot Fox was suspended from office.

Yet bad behaviour was far from the only cloud to loom on the Benedictine horizon in the high Middle Ages. Generous tax breaks and donations of huge swathes of land had turned what had once been modest communities into vast, sophisticated businesses that employed serfs and hired labour to work the fields – all at a significant profit. This meant that monks could dedicate more time to scholarly pursuits such as producing illuminated manuscripts, and cementing their reputations as hubs of literacy and learning.

But, as some denizens of the monasteries grew fat on their profits, they found themselves increasingly at odds with the old Benedictine maxims of austerity and self-restraint. "I saw his sleeves lined at the hand, with squirrel fur, and that the finest in the land," observed Geoffrey Chaucer of the spendthrift monk in his 14th-century work *The Canterbury Tales*. Yet the disparity between the Benedictine philosophy and the reality on the ground was bringing rival religious orders to the table long before that.

GOD'S HOLY WARRIORS

The best known of these other groups were the Cistercians, who rose to prominence in 11th-century France. Gaining traction across the British Isles in the wake of the Norman Conquest, they advocated a return to the hard manual labour and austere lifestyle championed by Saint Benedict himself and, to this end, moved against the "excessive" amounts of sculpture and art that was often found in monastic buildings.

The Cistercians accused the Benedictine monks of eating too much, and too well. That was certainly not a charge they could level again the Carthusians, who spent most of their time praying in solitary cells. This most austere of religious orders established 10 monasteries across the British Isles between the late 12th century and the Reformation (including London Charterhouse), yet were simply too severe to rival the Benedictines and Cistercians in both size and popularity.

While the Carthusians dedicated their lives to isolation and prayer, the Knights Templar had a very different calling: to protect Christian pilgrims travelling to sacred sites in the Holy Land. Via a combination of martial prowess ("They were the fiercest fighters of all the Franks," conceded the Muslim chronicler Ibn al Athir) and financial acumen, this band of holy warriors all of whom swore an oath of poverty, chastity and obedience became an international powerhouse. Not only did they acquire a sizable fleet of ships and buy the Mediterranean island of Cyprus from Richard the Lionheart, they also served as a lending institution to European monarchs and nobles.

ABOVE: **A modern drawing depicts the Cistercian Cleeve Abbey, Somerset, as it may have appeared in the 13th century**

BELOW: **A Victorian illustration of a Carthusian monk. Founded in 1084, the Carthusian order gained a reputation for practising austerity to the extreme**

In many ways, the Templars were victims of their own success, their vast wealth helping pitch them into conflict with French king Philip IV, who would engineer their downfall at the start of the 14th century.

And the same could be said for the monastic orders back in England. Across the course of the Middle Ages, they had produced some of the most extraordinary works of architecture to have graced the British Isles. For every Rievaulx Abbey in North Yorkshire, Tintern Abbey in south Wales and Cluniac Acre Priory in Norfolk (all of which can be seen today), there were any number of monastical masterpieces dotted across the country – testament to the unique status that these religious orders acquired.

The monasteries had ruled England's skylines and spiritual lives for a millennium. With the accession of Henry VIII to the throne in the 16th century – hungry for money, power and a son – all that was to come to an end.

WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X3

ON A MISSION

Rather than hiding away in cloisters, medieval friars sought to spread the gospel far and wide. **Professor Nicholas Orme** explores the origins of these influential religious figures

In the first two decades of the 13th century, the monastic life was turned on its head by two reformers: Saint Dominic (died 1221) in France, and Saint Francis (died 1226) in Italy. Both men saw a scope for clergy who would live together like monks but, rather than shutting themselves from the world, would go into it to spread the gospel by preaching and hearing confessions. Moreover, these clergy called friars would not depend on landed endowments for their support, but on donations. They were, in effect, the forerunners of modern charities.

There were eventually four main orders of friars: Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians and Carmelites. They first came to England in the 1220s, and established friaries in towns. These seemed to offer the best field for missions, and their wealth provided the donations that the friars depended on. Most English towns of any size came to have a friary, and the biggest had one of each order. For the rest of the Middle Ages, friars were active in towns and became closely enmeshed with local people, especially the wealthy. They also made journeys outside the towns to work in the countryside.

There were other unusual features of life as a friar. Friars did not have a settled home like monks. Their leaders could send them wherever they were needed, even overseas. Then, for friars to be effective preachers and confessors, they had to be well educated. From the start they established bases in the new universities: Oxford from 1221 and Cambridge from about 1226.

SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

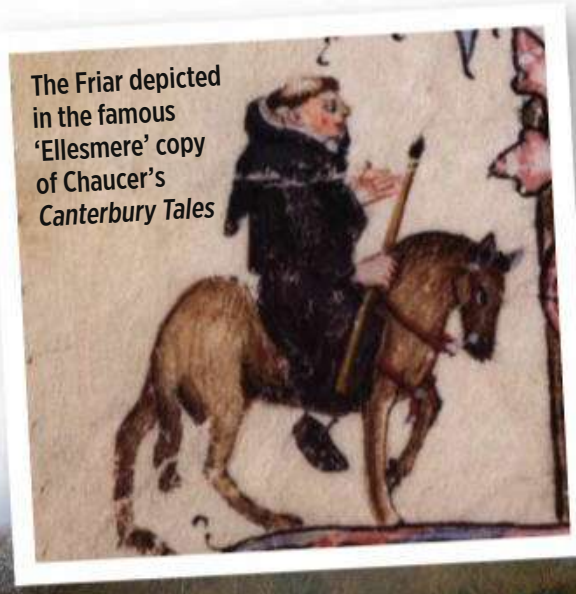
Each order developed an elaborate system of training its members. New recruits were taught Latin in their initial friary, after which they studied philosophy and theology either there or at a regional centre. The best students then went to university, where they gained degrees in theology. The Oxbridge friaries were, in effect, the earliest colleges, in the sense of large communities of students following a curriculum.

This system enabled the friars to make a huge contribution to learning. They became skilled at putting knowledge into a logical and accessible form. The great theological summary, *Summa Theologica*, by Saint Thomas Aquinas (died 1274) was written by a friar. Others compiled dictionaries, encyclopedias and treatises on politics and education. In England, the Franciscan Bartholomew Glanvill (mid 13th century) put together a general encyclopedia in Latin. It was translated into English in 1398 and was still being published in Elizabethan England. A Dominican recluse of King's Lynn named Geoffrey produced the first English and Latin dictionary in 1440, which was also the first dictionary of English words in alphabetical order.

The success of the friars had effects both positive and negative. Monks, who were at first held aloof from university education, were stimulated to follow them in this respect by the end of the 13th century. They, too, came to found colleges. Some friars rose to high office in the Church, including Robert Kilwardby, archbishop of Canterbury (1273 78), and his successor John Pecham (1279 92). Others gained influence as confessors to kings and queens.

At the same time, the friars encountered some hostility, with many parish clergy viewing them as unwelcome rivals. Disputes arose when people wished to be buried in friaries rather than in their parish churches. There were also satirical remarks about friars begging for food and money, and their alleged preference for the rich than the poor (something that surfaces in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). Nevertheless, the friars continued to recruit and survive until they were abolished at the English Reformation in 1538.

NICHOLAS ORME is emeritus professor of history at the University of Exeter. His latest book is *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale University Press, 2021)



The Friar depicted in the famous 'Ellesmere' copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

RIGHT: **Saint Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar, is still considered one of Christianity's greatest theologians**

BELOW: **The ruined Greyfriars Franciscan friary in Dunwich, Suffolk – a victim of the English Reformation**

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X3

HOLY DAYS

Medieval lives followed the ebb and flow of the Church calendar

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN AND NICHOLAS ORME

The Church calendar was deeply ingrained in the lives of medieval people and the passing of time was marked by Church festivals as much as by the day and month.

The Church year was divided into two parts. The first followed Christ's life on earth, beginning on Advent Sunday and ending on Corpus Christi in midsummer. Its services referenced the events of the life of Jesus. The second covered the rest of the year, in which the services had more general themes. The year was also punctuated by many saints' days.

Lay people were expected to observe the Church year by attending services on the special days and by fasting on Fridays, during Lent and on the days before major feasts. Holy days were also holidays, allowing (and indeed requiring) abstention from work apart from domestic tasks.

With so many observances to remember, it was the job of the clergy to remind their congregation of the upcoming festivals and what was expected of them. Liturgical books included calendars to help the clergy keep track, and literate lay people would have them in the front of their own personal prayer books.

Here is just a small selection of the festivals and feast days celebrated in the Middle Ages...

GETTY IMAGES X8, ALAMY X4

ABOVE: **A 14th-century depiction of a Corpus Christi celebration**

RIGHT: **A calendar page from an early 16th-century Book of Hours**

JANUARY

The Feast of the Circumcision of Christ Then, as now, 1 January was regarded as New Year's Day, although the year date (up to 1752) did not change until 25 March.

The Octave of Epiphany An eight-day celebration (6–13 January) of Christ's baptism and the arrival of the Magi bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

MARCH - APRIL

Lent The date of Easter – as it does now – varied from year to year. Linked to the first new Moon of spring, the festival could fall at any point between 22 March and 25 April. Easter was preceded by Lent, a period of six weeks beginning on Ash Wednesday. This was a penitential day; ashes would be blessed and then painted on the foreheads of the clergy and laity in the shape of a cross. During Lent a large curtain, known as the Lenten veil, screened the high altar in the chancel from view and all the images in the church were veiled, too. Adults were also required to abstain from animal products other than fish, and to make their confession in church.

MAY - JUNE

Pentecost (Whit Sunday) Seven days after Rogation week, this was the third great festival of the Church year. People were required to come to church to offer their 'smoke farthings' – the amount required from every house with a hearth. The following week, the money was sent to the local cathedral in a procession of lay people; the various parish processions often wrangled over who came in front of whom, sometimes leading to fights.

Corpus Christi Celebrated on the second Thursday after Pentecost, this feast honoured the communion bread and wine, which were believed to become Christ's blood and body. A public procession displayed the consecrated elements to the world.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

5th Oct The Feast of Saint Raphael

All Saints Day Celebrated on 1 November, this was a major feast day, as was All Souls the next day. On All Saints Eve, vigils were kept in churches and church bells rang through the night on behalf of the souls in Purgatory.

23rd & 25th Nov According to a proclamation of Henry VIII in 1541, the feasts of Saint Clement (23 November) and Saint Katharine (25 November) saw children dress as "counterfeit priests, bishops and women, and so led with songs and dances from house to house, blessing the people and gathering of money."

FEBRUARY

Candlemas This festival (2 February) honoured the churching of the Virgin Mary 40 days after Christ's birth and, from at least the 10th century, was a major feast day requiring church attendance. Each parishioner – adults and children – came to church bringing a candle, where they would hear mass and make a monetary offering. The candles became the perquisite of the parish clergyman.

Both adults and children were required to attend church – candle in hand – on the festival of Candlemas

An ornate window at Canterbury Cathedral depicting Christ's crucifixion – an event marked on Good Friday

Holy Week and Easter

The last week of Lent began with Palm Sunday, a day of celebration. It was a week full of elaborate ceremonies. After mass on Maundy Thursday, the altars were stripped of coverings and ornaments. The next day, Good Friday, was a day of mourning on which the story of Christ's passion was read from the Gospel of John. The laity would perform the ritual of 'creeping to the cross', crawling or crossing the floor on their knees to kiss the cross. Easter Day required all adult parishioners to receive communion in the form of a consecrated wafer and a sip of unconsecrated wine.

Hocktide This folk custom – held on the second Monday and Tuesday after Easter – saw men and women take turns to capture each other. The money each paid for their release was given for the upkeep of the parish church.

Rogationtide The three-day celebration of Rogationtide – each day representing one of the three ages of the world – took place six weeks after Easter, with long processions led by a straw-stuffed dragon as a representation of the Devil. On the third day, the dragon had the straw removed from its tail so that it hung limp, and was relegated to the back of the procession. The Devil had been defeated and Christ was now triumphant.

JULY - AUGUST

2nd July
The Visitation of the Virgin to her cousin Elizabeth

26th July
The Feast of Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin

1st August
The Feast of Saint Peter (Lammas Day)

6th August
The Transfiguration of Jesus

SEPTEMBER

Michaelmas Day The feast of Saint Michael the Archangel was celebrated on 29 September. As summer ended and winter loomed, this and some other Christian festivals sought to deflect the ill effects of the darkness to come. Michael is especially associated with victory over the powers of evil.

A Renaissance depiction of Saint Michael – one of the archangels

DECEMBER

Saint Nicholas Day This day (6 December) saw the ceremony of the boy bishop, a custom that was often repeated on Holy Innocents' Day (28 December). In a reversal of roles, a boy of the parish would act as bishop (with other boys serving as his clergy or servants) for 24 hours, during which he would preside over the liturgy and bless those in church. Afterwards, the boys would tour the local area asking for food and money.

Advent The season of Advent began with Advent Sunday, which could fall between 27 November and 3 December, and was a solemn period. The Book of Isaiah, with its prophecies of Christ's birth, would be read at the morning service and fasting was recommended. Marriages were forbidden, as with Lent and Rogationtide.

Christmas This was the last of the three great feasts of the year (with Easter and Pentecost). Three masses could be celebrated, beginning at midnight, and churches could be decorated with holly and ivy or extra candles. The three days after Christmas (those of Saint Stephen, Saint John the Evangelist and the Holy Innocents) were also major festivals. Wealthy households would take the period between Christmas and Epiphany (6 January) as a holiday, exchanging gifts on 1 January, New Year's Day, rather than at Christmas.

The Magi – Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar – present their gifts to the infant Jesus while Jesus and Mary look on

A MAN'S WORLD?

Medieval women may not have been able to join the clergy as they do today. But, says **Professor Nicholas Orme**, their influence upon religious life was certainly felt in other ways

Describing Church history can give the impression that it is a history of men. Kings, popes, bishops and clergy dominate it, while the roles of women are less apparent. But this is mostly due to surviving records than real circumstances; women made up half of the Church's membership and they were a large and active part of its life.

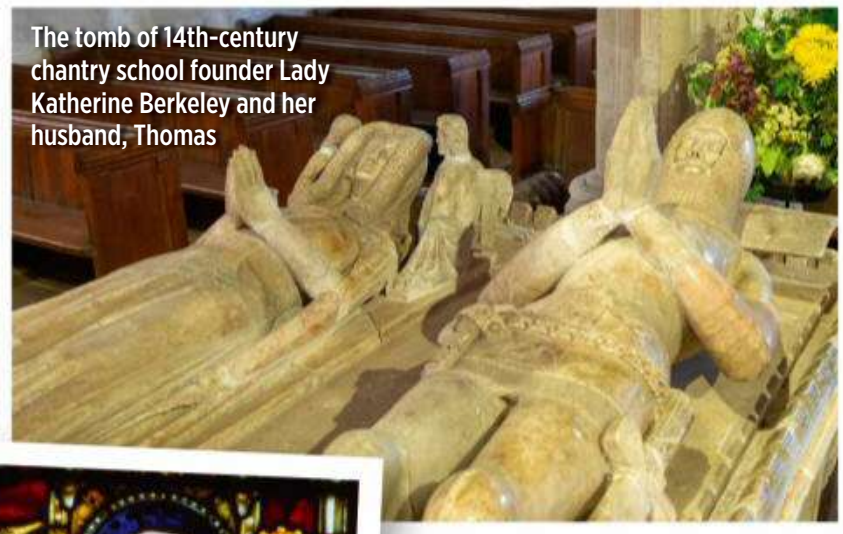
True, they could not be ordained. The chief full time religious vocation they could follow was as nuns. There were nearly 150 nunneries in England in the 1200s, housing over 3,000 nuns: far fewer than the 14,000 monks and friars. Most nunneries, moreover, were poorer than monasteries. Social convention limited what nuns could do; they could live a life of prayer, but medical and social care were barred to them.

Women had more influence in the everyday world. Throughout the Middle Ages, the wealthy among them used their resources to fund church activities. Some Anglo Saxon women of high birth founded abbeys, like Hilda at Whitby and Etheldreda at Ely. This continued during the expansion of monasteries that followed the Norman Conquest. Judith, countess of Huntingdon, founded the abbey of Elstow in Bedfordshire. Maud, the wife of King Stephen, assisted him in doing so at Coggeshall and Faversham, while Lady Gundreda helped to establish the Cistercians at Byland in Yorkshire.

CHANTRIES AND COLLEGES

The influence of women upon the Church is also apparent among those of knightly and gentry status. Some were patrons of parish churches, with power to appoint the clergy. If they were married this was formally done by their husbands, but we should not rule out their influence. If they were widowed, they had full power to do so. Coming to church they sat in the chancel with their families, enjoying the deference of clergy and congregation.

Some founded chantries, employing priests to pray for their families. Lady Katherine Berkeley's chantry and grammar school at Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire, endowed in 1384, became a model for the many small-town schools created in England over the next 300 years. At a higher level, several university colleges owe their existence to women, notably Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, at Christ's and St John's, Cambridge.

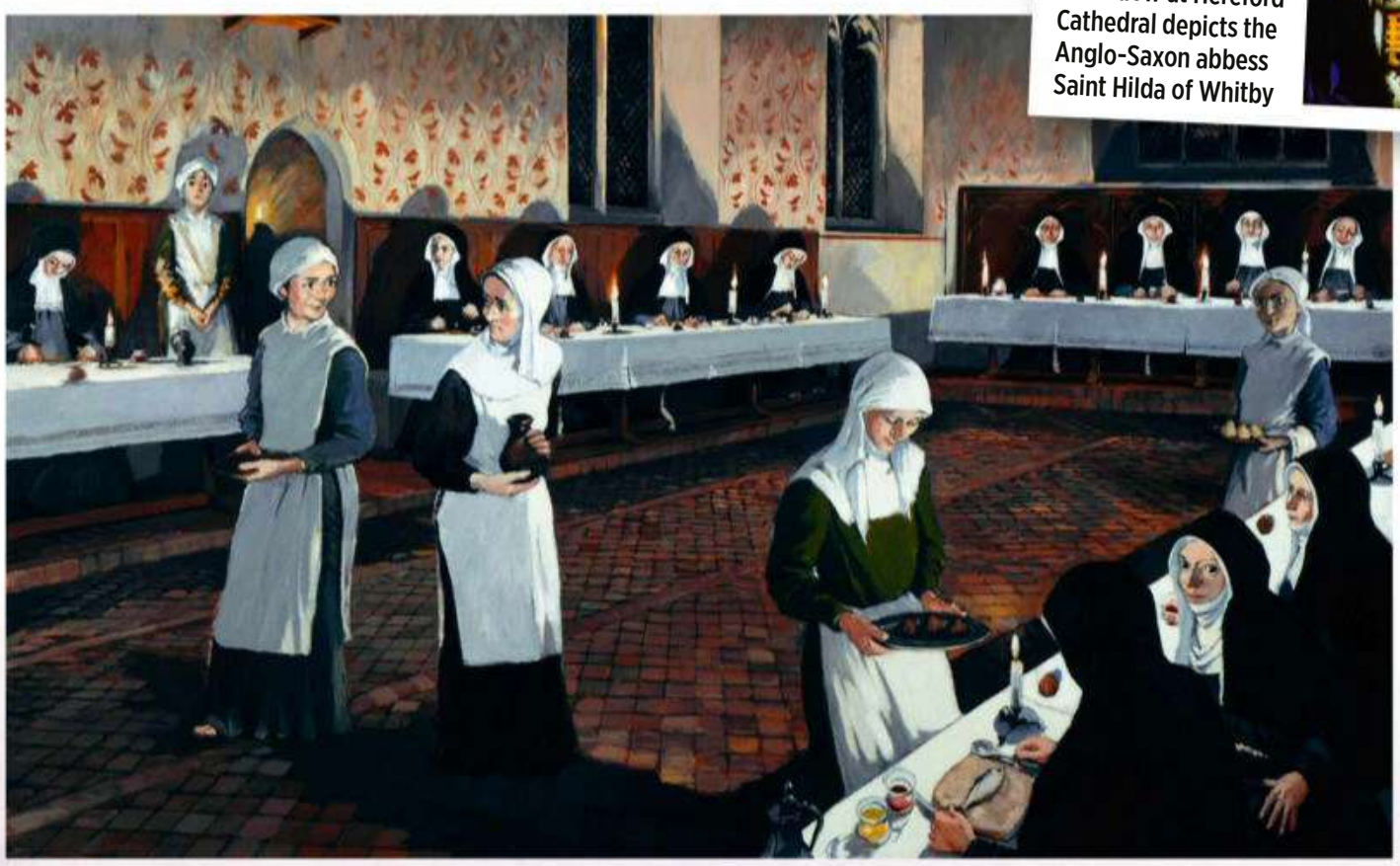


The tomb of 14th-century chantry school founder Lady Katherine Berkeley and her husband, Thomas

A window at Hereford Cathedral depicts the Anglo-Saxon abbess Saint Hilda of Whitby

Parish churches were ostensibly run by men: the clergyman and the churchwardens. However, being a warden went by rotation round the farmers of the parish, and the occasional widow filled the office when it was her farm's turn. Many parishes had organisations of maidens and of wives, holding activities and raising funds. And, as far as services were concerned, women may have been better attenders than men, especially on weekdays.

Finally, we should not forget the Christian role of women in homes, little though we know about it. Manor houses, and sometimes merchant houses, had private chapels in which women and their families could pray. Mothers shared with their husbands the duty of bringing up their children to know the basic prayers and how to behave in church. The Church could not have endured without the unseen support of women – whether at home or sitting in the pews.



Women wanting to devote themselves to religion could join a nunnery; in the 1200s, there were nearly 150 such residences in England

GETTY IMAGES X1, ALAMY X3

NICHOLAS ORME is emeritus professor of history at the University of Exeter. His latest book is *Going to Church in Medieval England* (Yale University Press, 2021)

Religious heretics were commonly burned at the stake – a practice that accelerated from the mid-12th century onwards

REBELS WITH A CAUSE

Those brave enough to contradict the teachings of the Church often found themselves paying a heavy price for their heresy

In medieval England, heretics didn't tend to be anti-Christian, nor atheist. They simply believed in a simpler form of Christianity, one that didn't involve the rituals and ceremonies of the Catholic Church. As such, the persecution of heretics – which resulted in thousands of people being burned at the stake, both in England and across Europe – can largely be seen more as an issue of disobedience towards the Church rather than overtly anti-Christian behaviour.

Until around 1160, only a small number of leaders of heretic groups were burned at the stake. After then, ordinary folk were increasingly put to death for espousing beliefs that deviated from the strictures of the Church, a pattern that accelerated as the centuries unrolled.

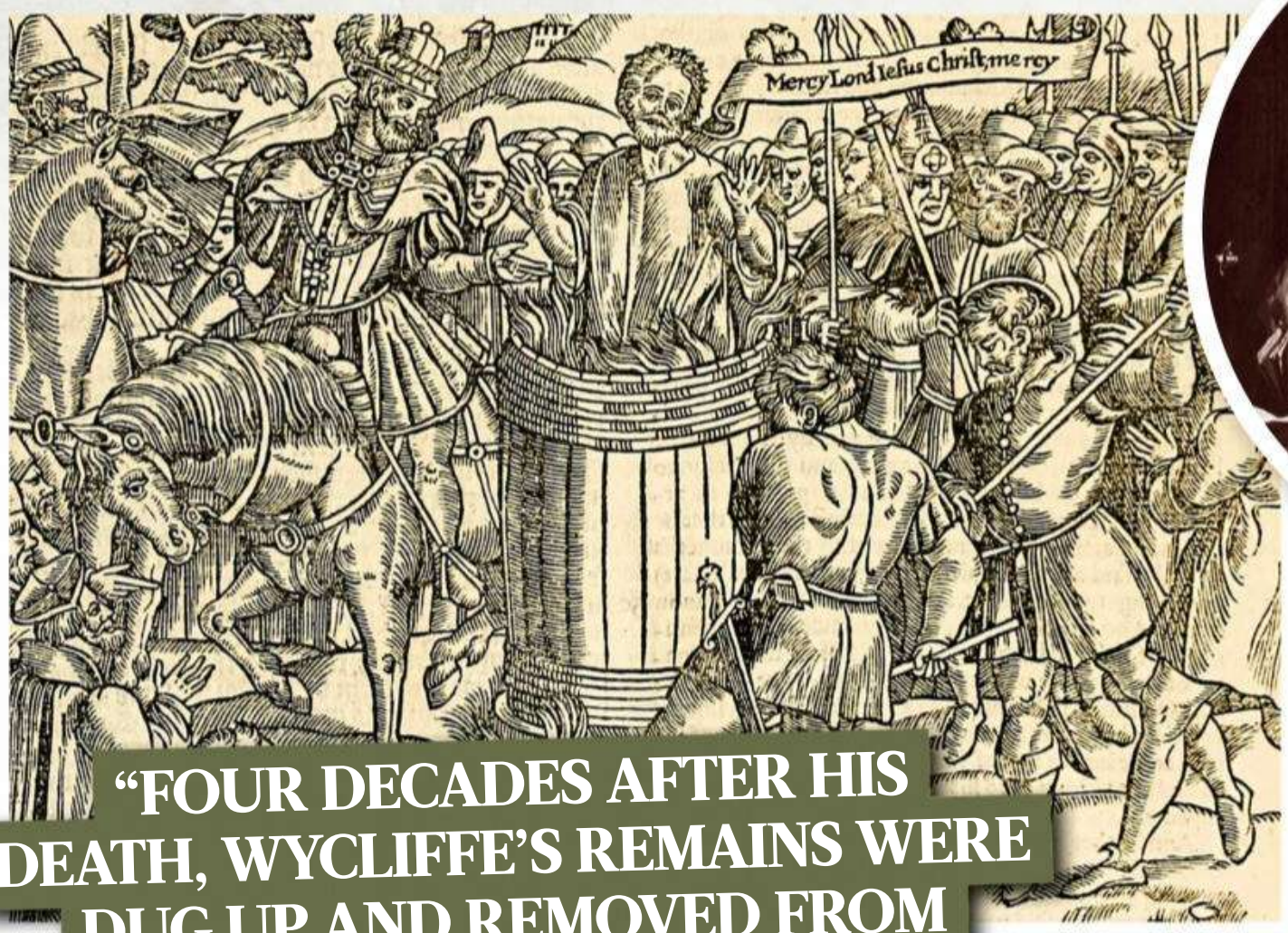
In 1401, Parliament started proceedings against a group they sneeringly branded 'Lollards' (a term derived from the Middle Dutch word *lollaert*, meaning 'mumbler'). Feeding from the writings of the theologian John Wycliffe, the Lollards opposed the presence of particular rituals within church worship, including the sacraments and the veneration of saints. Furthermore, the wealth of the Church was considered obscene, an example of its preoccupation with, and corruption by, temporal, earthly concerns.

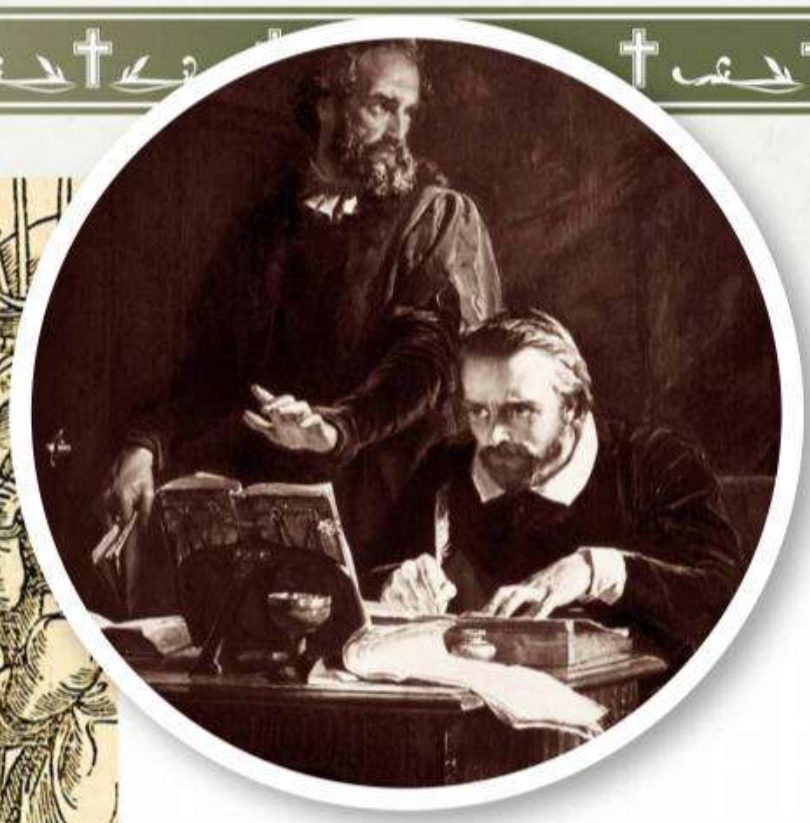
All the while that his criticism was levelled more at the wealth and behaviour of the Church, Wycliffe had enjoyed the support of at least some churchmen, even if it provoked the ire of Pope Gregory XI. But when he spoke out against the Eucharist – the idea that bread and wine could be turned into the body and blood of Christ – any support Wycliffe retained within both the Church and the nobility dissolved.

Laymen known as 'poor priests' helped spread radical political ideas across England

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

Wycliffe's thinking partly influenced the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, beliefs that had trickled across the country via a band of laymen known as 'poor priests'. The revolt, not advocated by





“FOUR DECADES AFTER HIS DEATH, WYCLIFFE’S REMAINS WERE DUG UP AND REMOVED FROM CONSECRATED GROUND”

ABOVE: **A woodcut depicting the burning of John Badby, a noted Lollard, in 1410**

ABOVE RIGHT: **William Tyndale’s English Bible translations helped drive the Reformation under Henry VIII**

BELOW LEFT: **Sir John Oldcastle – a former friend of Henry V – was executed after his Lollard sympathies were exposed**

BELOW: ***Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, published during the reign of Elizabeth I, paid tribute to those killed for their Protestant beliefs**

Wycliffe himself, saw the killing of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury. The following year, 24 of Wycliffe’s doctrines were ruled either erroneous or heretical. Holding any of these opinions, or disseminating them publicly, was declared illegal.

Somehow escaping excommunication, Wycliffe continued to rail against what he believed to be a corrupt Catholic Church for the rest of his life. Four decades after his death in 1384, his remains were dug up and removed from consecrated ground. He had finally received an excommunication of sorts.

In 1401, a law called *De Heretico Comburendo*, or ‘On the burning of heretics’, was deployed and, in the same year, a priest named William Sawtrey was burned for his thoughts on the Eucharist, believing that “bread remains in the same state as before”. It was a popular view among the Lollards, one of whom commented: “Summe folys cummyn to churche thynckyng to see the good Lorde – what shulde they see there but bredde and wyne?”

The 1401 law forced Lollardy underground, but a number of high-profile Lollards remained targets for persecution. In 1410, John Badby was burned at the stake, again for criticism of the Eucharist: “if every host consecrated at the altar were the Lord’s body, then there be 20,000 Gods in England”.

Another notable critic of the Church was John Oldcastle, a close confidant of Henry V. After his Lollard sympathies had been revealed, Oldcastle was brought to the Tower of London where he labelled the pope the Antichrist. Charged with heresy, Oldcastle was sentenced to death. However, a band of Lollards sprang him from the Tower, after which he organised an insurrection – the Oldcastle Revolt – centred around the kidnapping of the king. The failed rebellion ended with Oldcastle’s execution.

The persecutions and executions continued throughout the 15th century and into the next. In 1511, five years after the burning of a notable Lollard, William Tylsworth, in Amersham, a bishop began an inquiry into religious dissent in the town. The inquiry ultimately led to the execution of a further six Lollards in 1521, posthumously known as the Amersham Martyrs.

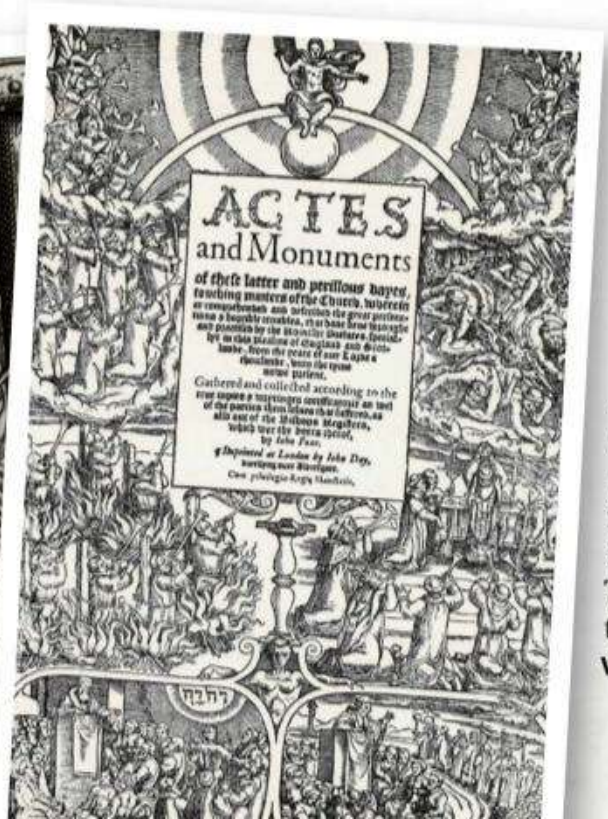
At his trial, Tylsworth had refused to renounce his pronouncements, but several others recanted their beliefs and received reprieves. One of these was Thomas Harding, who would be charged again a couple of decades later in 1532. As he awaited his execution, Harding was killed after being struck on the head by a piece of the pyre’s firewood, as brandished by a bystander. As the Elizabethan tome *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* later described it, “when they had set fire to the fagots, one of the spectators dashed out his brains with a billet”.

A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME

Harding’s crime had been to be found in possession of William Tyndale’s book *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, published in 1528. His would be the same fate that befell anyone owning Wycliffe’s earlier translation of the Bible from Latin into Middle English. Tyndale’s book called for a country’s head of state to become the head of the church, replacing the pope. As such, it became a profound influence on Henry VIII, inspiring his split from the Catholic Church in 1534.

Henry’s divorce from Rome can be seen as the denouement of the religious dissent of the previous few centuries. In one fell swoop, the power of the Catholic Church in England was seriously shorn, with the supposedly heretic beliefs and writings that had been outlawed for generations, and punishable by death, providing the framework for the establishment of Protestantism in England. That was quite the turnaround.

WORDS: NIGE TASSELL



GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X6

AN INTOLERANT SOCIETY

Virulent anti-Semitism made life for England's Jews increasingly dangerous

Actively encouraged by William I, Jews first came to settle in England following the Norman Conquest. As Christians were disqualified from practising usury – the charging of interest on money borrowed – the burgeoning Jewish community made this their dominant occupation and, as a result, became distinctly wealthy.

Because of their value to the exchequer, Jews were afforded royal protection, a status that, in combination with their wealth, made them the target of deep mistrust from the wider population. Violent attacks upon Jews became increasingly common. One of the more gruesome episodes came in 1190 when the entire Jewish community of York sought the sanctity of the city's castle from murderous gangs. Without a feasible means of escape, each and every one took their own lives.

In the 13th century, Jews were easily identifiable in England, thanks to an instruction from the Royal Council that they must all wear a pair of white patches of cloth or parchment on their upper clothing. There was also widespread intolerance of Jewish religious practice. Most sinister were the repeated accusations that Christian children were being murdered as part of Passover ceremonies, rumours that would regularly resurface despite being without foundation.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, extra taxes were levied on Jews. Despite only forming 0.25 per cent of the population of England, they paid up to 8 per cent of all taxes due to the Royal Treasury. Much of this revenue funded Christian crusades and the construction of churches and cathedrals.

In 1269, laws were introduced that forbade Jews owning property beyond that in which they lived. Six years later, Jews were outlawed from practising usury. A generous interpretation might be that Edward I was attempting to better integrate Jews into English society by forcing them into other lines of business, but his true intentions came with the issuing of a royal edict in 1290 that expelled all Jews. Any Jew found in England after 1 November could be sentenced to death. As many as 16,000 fled to mainland Europe, while those who remained either disguised their heritage or converted to Christianity. Jews would not be readmitted to England until the 1650s.

An illustration from the 14th-century *Rochester Chronicle* depicts Jews being expelled from England in 1290 (*above*). A century earlier, York's Jews had taken their own lives while being besieged by an angry mob (*right*)

GET HOOKED

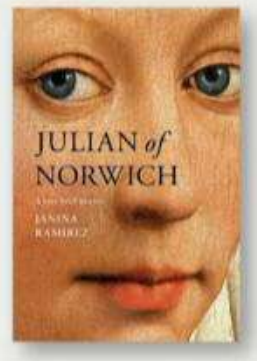
If we've whetted your appetite for the medieval Church, why not explore the topic further with these books, podcasts and TV shows

BOOKS

Going to Church in Medieval England

By Prof Nicholas Orme (Yale University Press, 2021)

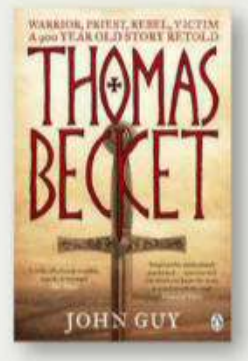
This richly illustrated account of parish churches and churchgoers in England, from the Anglo-Saxons to the mid-16th century, explores the finer details of church life – from who did, and did not, attend, to how churches conducted baptisms, marriages and burials.



Julian of Norwich: A Very Brief History

By Janina Ramirez (SPCK Publishing, 2016)

Janina Ramirez explores Julian's remarkable life and times, offering insights into how and why her writing has survived, and what we can learn from this 14th-century mystic whose work has often lain hidden in the shadows of her male contemporaries.



Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim: A 900-Year-Old Story Retold

By John Guy (Penguin, 2013)

John Guy looks at the life of Thomas Becket, the son of a merchant draper who was befriended and favoured by Henry II – a man who quickly ascended the rungs of power and privilege before losing it all.

ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ **The delight and mystery of rural churches**: Medieval historian Dr Emma Wells reveals the secrets hidden in our rural chapels and churchyards on the BBC Countryfile podcast. Listen at *bit.ly/2XRpR5a*

History Extra

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on the medieval Church, visit our website: *historyextra.com***

WATCH

The Pillars of the Earth

(Now streaming on Amazon Prime and My5)

Based on Ken Follett's historical novel of the same name, *The Pillars of the Earth* sees an idealistic mason set out to erect a glorious cathedral in 12th-century Kingsbridge against a backdrop of war and religious strife.

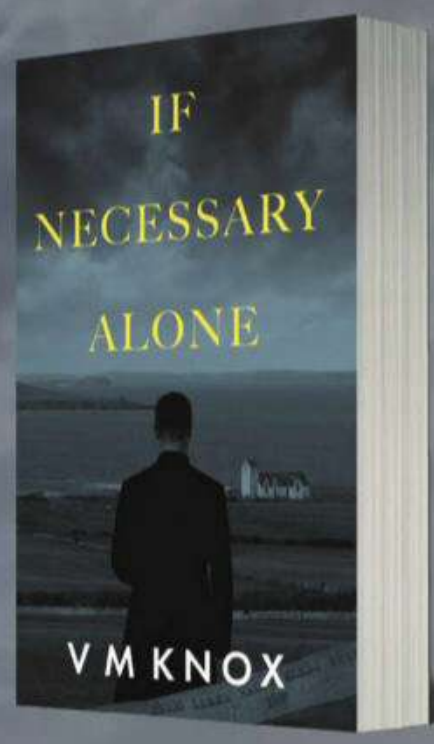
Cadfael

(Seasons 1–4 now streaming on BritBox; seasons 3–4 available on the ITV Hub)

Based on Ellis Peters' bestselling books, the four seasons of *Cadfael* see Sir Derek Jacobi star as a former soldier-turned-medieval monk at Shrewsbury Abbey, with a knack for solving fiendish mysteries.

Intrigue, Murder, Revenge and Embedded Nazi Spies

In Spite of All Terror is the first in a series of crime thrillers by V M Knox that mix historical fact, crime fiction and superb characterisation. Set in September 1940, when Britain stood alone against an imminent Nazi invasion, Reverend Clement Wisdom and other men from the restricted occupations, were called to join the covert Auxiliary Units. Following the murders of several of Clement's team, he finds himself embroiled in the murky world of espionage where things are never what they seem.

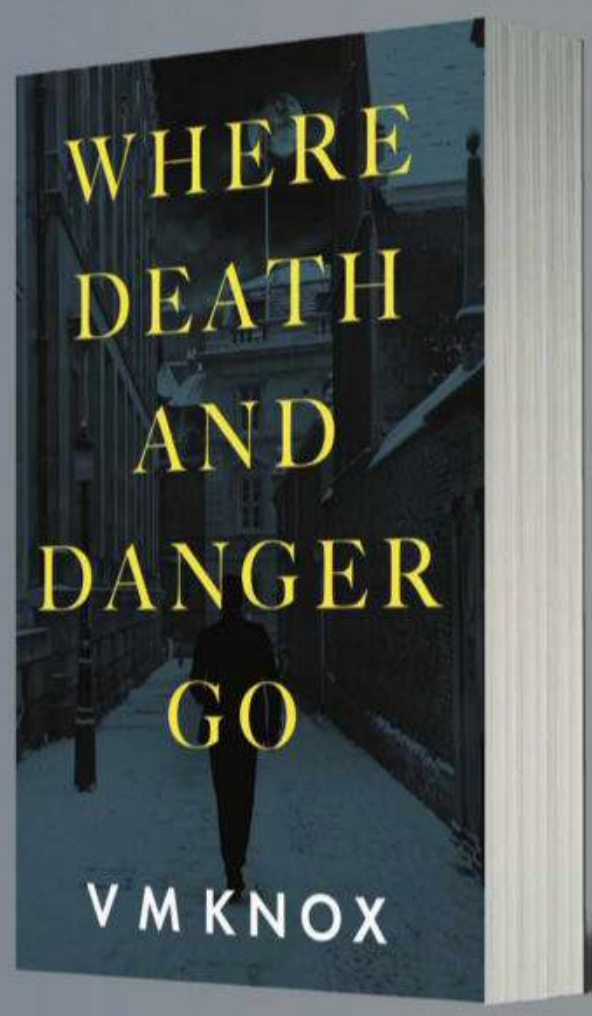


If Necessary Alone is the second thriller in this World War II crime series. Clement Wisdom, now a Major in Special Duties Branch, Secret Intelligence Service, is sent to remote Caithness to investigate illicit encrypted radio transmissions. As soon as he arrives there, an out-station wireless operator is found brutally murdered and Clement becomes entangled in a web of death and silence. Alone, and in the bitter Scottish winter, Clement must stay one step ahead of a killer if he is to remain alive.

Where Death and Danger Go is the third book in this World War II crime series. Set in the dark days of 1941, Britain fights on alone. Fear hangs in the air. Some yearn for peace and an end to the relentless Nazi bombing. Others are spurred on to fight. And some will manipulate a divided country for their own ends.

On a winter's night, a German spy parachutes into Cambridgeshire while another man is secretly murdered in the same field. Is he another enemy spy or has he been sent to his death? Either way, a killer lurks.

Major Clement Wisdom of Special Duties Branch of the SIS is sent to discover the dead man's identity and uncovers a sinister network of conspiracy where kidnap, murder and revenge threaten not only the safety of the nation but also Clement's life.



All three books can be purchased from online book sellers, Waterstones and independent book shops. Audiobooks for all three titles are now available.

Book 4 in the Clement Wisdom series out soon!

EWAN'S HIDDEN BATTLE

In 1965, a Scottish doctor named Ewan Forbes stood to inherit his family's baronetcy. But, as a transgender man, he would soon find himself embroiled in a top-secret legal case – with consequences that still affect the lives of trans people today. **Professor Zoë Playdon** examines a very different type of 'coming out' story...

Ewan Forbes pictured in 1965, alongside a modern photograph of his family's c17th-century castle near Alford, Aberdeenshire. The doctor was forced to defend his gender identity in court in an unprecedented, and dramatic, legal case

ALAMY X3

On 15 May 1967, the journalist George Watts attempted to report on a mysterious case being heard at the Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland's most senior civil court. But when he contacted the court officials for more information, he was met with a wall of silence. "There were clearly instructions 'from above' that we in the media were to be told nothing," he would later recall.

All Watts knew was that it involved a dispute over the inheritance of a baronetcy, and when the verdict was announced on 6 December 1968, he shared his anger at the lack of transparency in an article for the *Glasgow Herald*: "Disquiet over Forbes Sempill case secrecy."

He may not have known it at the time, but Watts' short report would later prove vital in revealing the story of a secret legal battle that rocked the British establishment. Deliberately kept out of public sight, the case would have shocking consequences for many decades to come. But what exactly was it about? And why would it end up having such dire implications?

FROM PEACE TO PANIC

The person at the heart of the case was a transgender man named Ewan Forbes. Born in 1912, Ewan was the youngest child of one of Scotland's noble families, famous for being the owners of Aberdeenshire's iconic Craigievar Castle and its 20,000 acre estate. The family were certainly well connected: Ewan's grandfather had been an intimate friend of Queen Victoria, while his father had served as an aide de camp to King George V.

By the time he turned six, Ewan's mother Gwendolen, the Lady Sempill realised her child was really a boy, even though he had been registered as 'female' at birth. Rather than sending him to boarding school with his siblings, she decided to home school him instead, letting him play as he wished and wear the kilt and riding breeches he preferred.

In the 1920s there were no 'puberty blockers' to buy time for trans children and their parents. However, research was being carried out into producing synthetic hormones, and in Berlin, the physician Magnus Hirschfeld was providing affirmative care for trans people at his Institute for Sexual Science. Gwendolen called into play her wide ranging family connections, and when Ewan was 15, she took him on a series of visits to specialist doctors in Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Paris. As a result of these trips, Ewan became a guinea pig for early testosterone treatment, giving him a "terrible plague of boils and pimples" followed by a "lusty growth of hair" on his chin, cheeks and chest as he went through male puberty.

During World War II, Ewan studied medicine at the University of Aberdeen and became a family doctor in his local town of Alford. He fell in love, and – so that he could get married – corrected his birth certificate in 1952 to show his sex as male. This was straightforward to do; at the time, being trans was medically classified as a variation of sex development, an intersex condition, and trans people therefore had no legal penalties attached to their lives.

Ewan led an idyllic existence, but things changed in 1965 when his older brother William died, and the family

Ewan's brother, William, pictured as a child alongside their father and grandfather. Each man inherited the title Lord Sempill when the previous holder died

ABOVE LEFT: **Ewan pictured during his time as a student at the University of Aberdeen**

ABOVE RIGHT: **The doctor's older sister, Margaret Forbes-Sempill, would later 'out' her brother**

GETTY IMAGES X2, GABRIEL FORBES-SEMPILL X2, ZOË PLAYDON X1

Arthur Corbett and April Ashley marry in 1963. The couple's acrimonious split would prove particularly traumatic for April

baronetcy became vacant. As with other hereditary titles awarded by the British Crown, the baronetcy was subject to primogeniture, an ancient convention that limited inheritance to first-born/eldest children, usually with a male preference. It was a tradition that also governed the monarchy itself, right up until the passing of the 2013 Succession to the Crown Act, which gave equal rights to princes and princesses (Elizabeth II only became queen in 1952 because there were no eligible males to take the throne at the time). In theory, Ewan should have been able to inherit the title with no questions asked, but upon William's death, a cousin – John Forbes-Sempill mounted a legal challenge to gain the baronetcy for himself, on the grounds that Ewan wasn't a "real man".

Although his birth certificate showed his sex to be male, as a doctor, Ewan knew that trans people were starting to be being reclassified by medicine. In 1962, the world's first gender identity clinic had opened at the University of California, Los Angeles, claiming that together with its counterparts in other American states – it could 'cure' gay and trans people with electro-convulsive therapy, frontal lobotomy, aversion therapy and psychotherapy. In fact, something of a turf war had broken out between the fields of endocrinology and psychiatry, meaning that the original, affirmative model of trans healthcare used by endocrinologists was increasingly being replaced by a punitive one developed by US psychiatrists.

Ewan thus faced a daunting prospect: if the courts accepted the latest medical 'science', he could end up being reclassified as female, with he and his wife redefined as lesbians who had committed a perjured marriage – a crime that carried a penalty of two years' imprisonment. (Although same-sex couples can now legally marry in Britain, knowingly providing false information is still liable to the same punishment.)

The events that followed were dramatic, tragic and stranger than fiction. Having begun legal proceedings, John used the courts to force Ewan to undergo a highly intrusive medical examination, secured by a damning letter penned by Ewan's estranged sister, Margaret. Not only did this traumatic ordeal 'prove' that Ewan was female, but things then took another shocking turn when Margaret – feeling remorse for her actions – was killed in a car accident while travelling to reconcile with her brother.

Grieving, and exposed to humiliating, prurient questions in court, Ewan and his wife, Patty, were forced to mount an imaginative defence, aided by the UK's most senior psychiatrist, Professor Martin Roth. But thanks to Roth's expertise, they won the case, successfully arguing that Ewan's "psychological outlook" was male, and that it was therefore only reasonable to classify him as a man.

For Ewan, it was a stunning victory – but the verdict inadvertently triggered a constitutional crisis. Securing the succession to the Crown is the prime directive of constitutional law, and at that time, the British monarchy was also subject to male-preference primogeniture. If a trans man was able inherit a primogeniture baronetcy, it meant that a trans man was able to inherit the Crown, too – and there would be no certainty as to who the next monarch in line would be.

A BACKWARDS STEP

Conveniently for the British Establishment, on the same day that Ewan went into court – 15 May 1967 – another aristocrat filed for divorce from a trans woman. In Gibraltar, the Honourable Arthur Corbett had gone through a ceremony of marriage with a fashion model named April Ashley; their relationship had failed, and April sued Arthur for maintenance.

Crucially for that case, though, April had not corrected her birth certificate: she was still legally male, and her 'marriage' was declared void from the start. Arthur could have ignored April's maintenance claim, for she had no legal relationship to him, but instead he began divorce proceedings. The judge, Lord Ormrod, had heard a similar case a few months earlier, *Talbot v Talbot*, which had been settled immediately since "there plainly was no marriage". But instead of doing the same thing for April and Arthur, Ormrod's court subjected April to a series of humiliating medical examinations.

"Ewan faced the threat of being reclassified as 'female', with he and his wife redefined as lesbians who had committed a perjured marriage"

A surgeon performs a lobotomy on a patient at a British mental hospital, 1946. Within a few years, similar treatments were being recommended in order to 'cure' trans people

MAIN: **Ewan pictured with his wife, Patty, on their wedding day in 1952. The couple would remain married until Ewan's death in 1991**

RIGHT: **Lord Ormrod annulled Arthur Corbett and April Ashley's marriage on the grounds Ashley did not 'qualify' as a woman**

FAR RIGHT: **Ashley pictured in 1962, two years after undergoing gender reassignment surgery**

"Silently, without debate in Parliament or new statutes being passed, trans people were deprived of their civil liberties"

Protesters gather outside Downing Street to campaign for better support for Britain's trans community, 2021. Before the Ewan Forbes case, trans people lived in complete legal equality with everyone else – but their rights were soon eroded

Before she went into the courtroom, April was taken to Ormrod's chambers, where she was shown Ewan Forbes' case and verdict, and told that she could not refer to it; everyone who knew about the matter was bound to secrecy, with all records concealed from the public eye. As April's solicitor Terrence Walton would recount, there were some interests that were "more important to protect than the rights of individuals".

Because of this technicality, the same expert medical evidence that had previously been used by Ewan was rejected. Instead, Ormrod drew on the latest developments in pseudo-medicine to form a circular argument that declared April – and all trans people – to be mentally ill masqueraders. From that point on, if a trans man tried to inherit a male primogeniture title, he could be declared delusional and "floridly psychotic" (as the medical term put it), and thus not eligible to receive it.

April thought the verdict just meant she wouldn't be able to marry again. But silently, without debate in Parliament or new statutes being passed, trans people were deprived of their civil liberties. Suddenly, they lost their employment rights and could no longer correct their birth certificates, marry their partners or adopt any children. More chillingly, if they couldn't so much as pay a parking fine, they might end up being sent to the wrong sex prison, where the rape of trans women was all too common – and not even classed as 'rape'.

REOPENING THE CASE

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, trans people in Britain were subjected to social abjection, pillorying by the press, and an NHS regime that included compulsory sterilisation. In 1996, however, there was a positive step forward when the European Court of Justice restored trans people's employment rights the first time anywhere in the world that case law prevented discrimination because of someone's gender identity.

Meanwhile, in the same year, April Ashley's solicitor finally disclosed the existence of Ewan's ordeal, and George Watts' short report in the *Glasgow Herald* enabled the details to be tracked down. Following the intervention of the home secretary, its proceedings were finally made public in 1998.

Despite a great deal of progress, trans people have not lived in complete legal equality since the Ewan Forbes case. The 2004 Gender Recognition Act still excludes trans people from the inheritance of hereditary titles, and following the 2013 Succession to the Crown Act, six parliamentary bills seeking a wider end to male primogeniture (which would also resolve the issue) have all failed.

After leaving medicine and spending much of his life as a rural landowner, Ewan Forbes passed away in 1991, aged 79. Ironically, his baronetcy was then inherited by John Forbes Sempill the same cousin who had tried to take the privilege away from him all those years earlier. Neither man could have predicted that their legal battle, fought in strictest secrecy, would go on to have such a seismic impact.

ZOË PLAYDON is emeritus professor of medical humanities at the University of London. Her most recent book is ***The Hidden Case of Ewan Forbes: The Transgender Trial that Threatened to Upend the British Establishment*** **(Bloomsbury, 2021)**

GET HOOKED

LISTEN

Zoë explores the case of Ewan Forbes on the HistoryExtra podcast: *historyextra.com/ewanforbes*

TRANSGENDER TRAILBLAZERS

Three other figures who made an impact on the fight for trans rights...

CASE 129

Trans pioneer Case 129 (we do not know her actual name) was a physician who gave psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing a long account of her "metamorphosis" into a woman, which he used in his landmark medical work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) to ensure trans people were protected from prosecution for "perversion".

'P' FROM CORNWALL

After being dismissed from her job as a teacher for being trans, 'P' mounted the landmark case *P v S and Cornwall County Council*, which defeated the UK government at the European Court of Justice in 1996. The verdict restored trans employment rights in Britain, and ushered in an era of successful trans activism – both at home and overseas.

MICHAEL DILLON

Trans man Michael Dillon instituted the annual side-by-side Women's Boat Race in 1936 while a student at an Oxford women's college. Subsequently, he became a ship's doctor, and after being outed by the press, retreated to become a Buddhist monk, taking the name Lobzang Jivaka, until his death in 1962.

Michael Dillon pictured during his rowing days. A qualified doctor like Ewan Forbes, he would later write a treatise on the treatment of trans people

DARRYL W. BULLOCK COLLECTION X1, GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1, REPRODUCTION FROM THE AUL' DAYS X1

WHAT GREAT PAINTINGS SAY

Jan van Eyck's 15th-century masterpiece has intrigued art historians for centuries, but what secrets does it contain?

The Arnolfini Portrait

by Jan van Eyck, 1434

At a modest 86cm by 60cm, *The Arnolfini Portrait* as it is commonly known is far from the National Gallery's largest painting, but it is certainly one of its most intriguing. Not for nothing has it been described as one of the greatest examples of Early Northern Renaissance art.

On first glance, the painting oil on wood appears to depict a wealthy couple in a domestic setting, the bed perhaps indicating that they are in a bedchamber. End of story? Far from it, says Dr Emma Capron, associate curator of Renaissance painting at the National Gallery, London.

"*The Arnolfini Portrait* is completely unique," says Capron. "There is nothing else like it that has survived in 15th century art. For a long time, it was thought to depict the Italian merchant Giovanni di Arrigo Arnolfini. But more recently, art historian Lorne Campbell has argued that the figures are more likely to be his merchant cousin, Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his second wife, whose identity is unknown. They all resided in Bruges."

HIDDEN DEPTHS

The pose of the woman as she deliberately clutches her voluminous green gown to her stomach has led many to conclude that she is pregnant, while the couple's joined hands could indicate that this is, in fact, a wedding portrait. Indeed, the artist's flourishing signature above the mirror *Johannes de eyck fuit hic* (Jan van Eyck was here) has been interpreted by some as the artist bearing witness to the nuptials.

"The pregnancy theory was popular for a long time," comments Capron. "But her pose actually has more to do with showing off the rich fabric of her gown, and ideas of female beauty at the time. Women with prominent stomachs had a strong visual appeal in the 15th century, and these were sartorially emphasised with high belts and folds of fabric. By lifting her gown, she reveals the expensive fur lining beneath – possibly ermine or miniver (squirrel fur) which is depicted in a white that would have been nearly impossible to achieve in real life. The focus on her stomach does relate to fertility, but it is more a demonstration of fecundity and an ability to produce an heir rather than evidence of pregnancy."

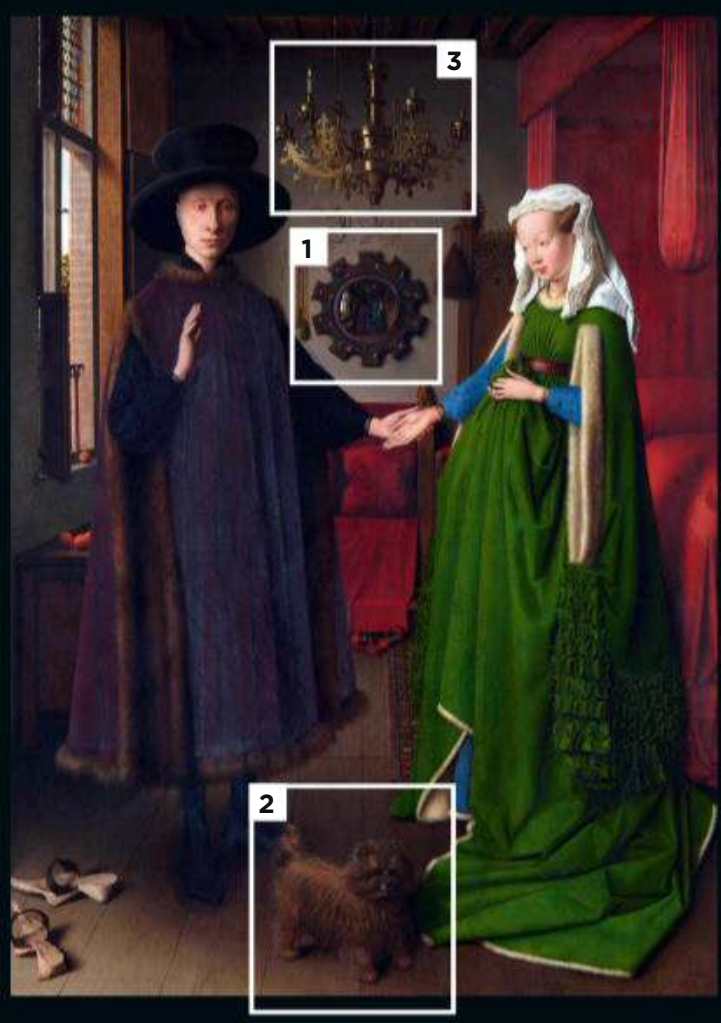
"This is not a wedding scene, either," Capron continues. "During a marriage ceremony, a couple would join their right hands here, he holds her right hand with his left. What they are actually doing is greeting visitors you can see two figures standing in the doorway reflected in the mirror behind them. What's more, they are not in a bedchamber: reception rooms often featured very elaborate beds an expensive piece of furniture that could be shown off to visitors."

Historically, much has been read into the other objects carefully strewn around the room. In the 1930s, art historian Erwin Panofsky used the painting as a basis for his theory of 'disguised symbolism', whereby each object has a hidden meaning. Paintings, he believed, could be decoded and deciphered: the oranges on the table represented original sin, for example, while the presence of the dog at the woman's feet could be read as a symbol of her fidelity to her husband.

"Panofsky's theories are very seductive," says Capron, "and he, too, also argued that the painting was a form of marriage contract. But his ideas are not always grounded in fact. Once we begin to unpick the realism of the painting, it becomes clear that what Van Eyck has done is create an illusion of reality; something to be enjoyed for its exquisite detail rather than its hidden mysteries.

"The portrait is a carefully constructed reality a figment of Van Eyck's imagination and a product of his incredible brush and powers of observation. His elaborate signature, 'Jan van Eyck was here', in this context calls us back to that fact that, as a place only he has visualised, he is the only one who has ever been in this room." ⊙

WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN



1. MIRROR

The two figures depicted in the ornate mirror are unidentified, but a popular theory is that one of them is the portrait's artist, Jan van Eyck himself.

2. DOG

The small dog is of a breed now known as the Brussels Griffon and, remarkably, was painted onto the portrait with no initial underdrawing.

3. CHANDELIER

One theory is that the painting is a posthumous portrait of Arnolfini's wife: the candle on his side is lit, the candle on her side is not. The presence of the little dog at her feet, as is often seen on female tombs, has also been put forward to support this idea.

GET HOOKED

The Arnolfini Portrait hangs in Room 63 at the National Gallery in London. Visit the website for more information on the painting, and how to visit: *nationalgallery.org.uk*

GETTY IMAGES

LETTERS TO SANTA COMPETITION

Following the success of 2020's Postcards from the Past competition, *BBC History Revealed*, with HistoryExtra.com, launched a festive competition for children aged 6–13 designed to challenge their historical knowledge and inspire their imaginations. Their task: to write a letter to Santa from the perspective of a historical person telling him what they've been doing over the past 12 months and what they would like him to bring them for Christmas.

Yet again, we've been amazed by the enthusiasm, artistic talent, imagination and level of historical knowledge shown in the entries submitted. Sadly, there could be only 10 winners, whose entries you can read over the next four pages.

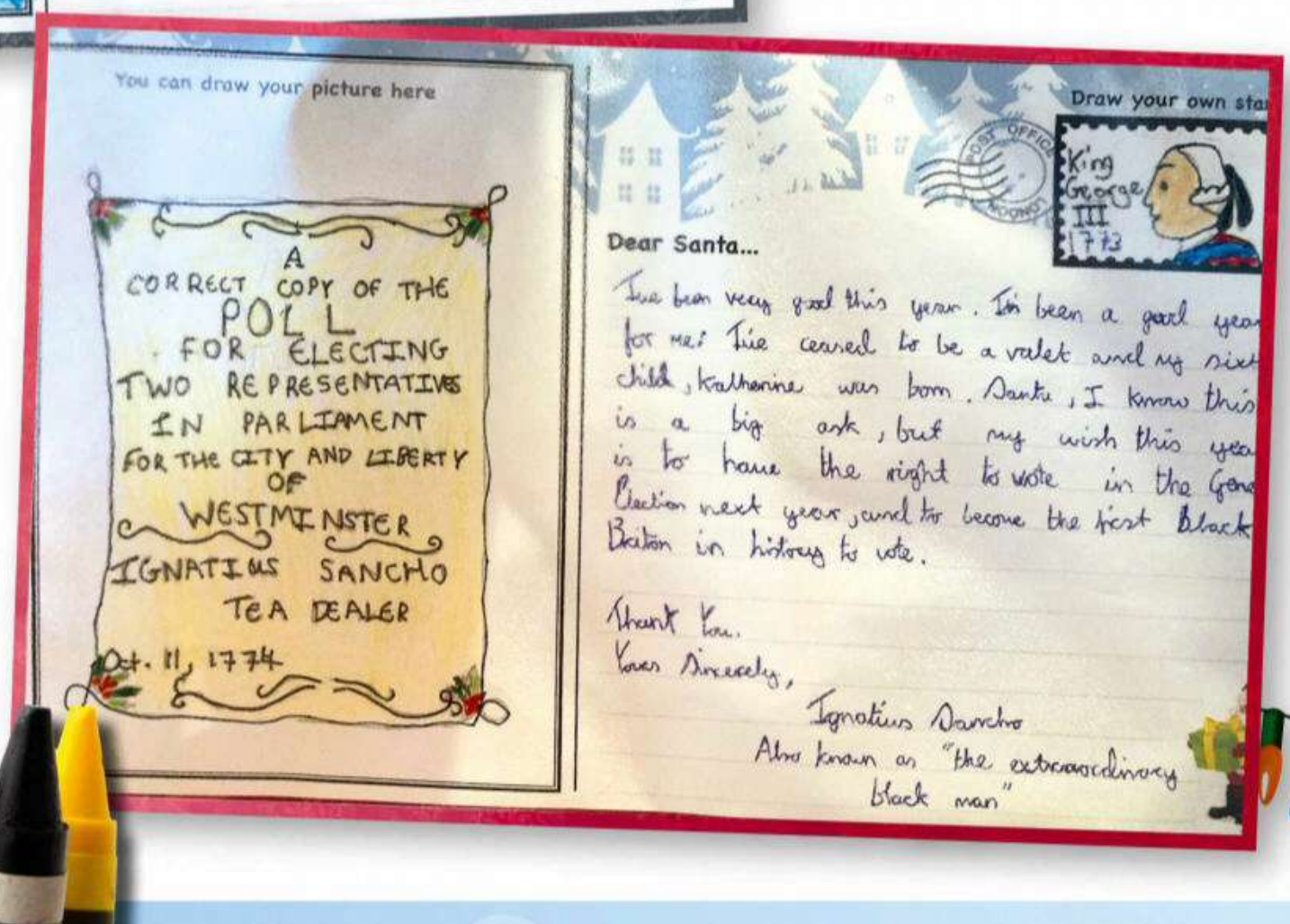
Whether their Christmas wishes will be fulfilled remains to be seen (he might manage a new lamp for Florence Nightingale, but it's doubtful America or France would fit inside the sleigh), but regardless, we'd like to say a huge thank you and well done to everyone who entered – your letters brought many smiles to the magazine team. And congratulations to all 10 winners – you each win a £20 book token and a framed copy of your letter.

Charlotte Hodgman
Editor

You can draw your picture here
October 1649
Draw your own stamp
POST OFFICE
NOONOT
Dear Santa...
Could I prithee have some Herbs for my ointments and remedies? For I have Ran out and thou have everything, right? Many people in these Stuart times are getting sick because of the plague. Over Yonder in the northpole is it all right? Thank you very much.
Best wishes,
The countess of kent, Elizabeth grey of wrest park.

NAME: **Violeta Puyana-Batlle**
AGE: **8**
WRITING AS: **Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Great to see a less well-known figure from history featured"**

Dear Santa,
Could I prithee have some herbs for my ointments and remedies? For I have run out and thou have everything, right? Many people in these Stuart times are getting sick because of the plague. Over yonder in the North Pole is it all right? Thank you very much.
Best wishes,
The Countess of Kent, Elizabeth Grey of Wrest Park


You can draw your picture here
A CORRECT COPY OF THE POLL FOR ELECTING TWO REPRESENTATIVES IN PARLIAMENT FOR THE CITY AND LIBERTY OF WESTMINSTER
IGNATIUS SANCHO
TEA DEALER
Oct. 11, 1774
Draw your own stamp
King George III 1773
Dear Santa...
I've been very good this year. It's been a good year for me: I've ceased to be a valet and my sixth child, Katherine, was born. Santa, I know this is a big ask, but my wish this year is to have the right to vote in the General Election next year, and to become the first black Briton in history to vote.
Thank You.
Yours Sincerely,
Ignatius Sancho
Also known as "the extraordinary black man"

NAME: **Electra Parry**
AGE: **12**
WRITING AS: **Ignatius Sancho**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Excellent historical detail"**

Dear Santa,
I've been very good this year. It's been a good year for me: I've ceased to be a valet and my sixth child, Katherine, was born. Santa, I know this is a big ask, but my wish this year is to have the right to vote in the General Election next year, and to become the first black Briton in history to vote.
Thank you.
Yours sincerely, Ignatius Sancho, also known as "the extraordinary black man"

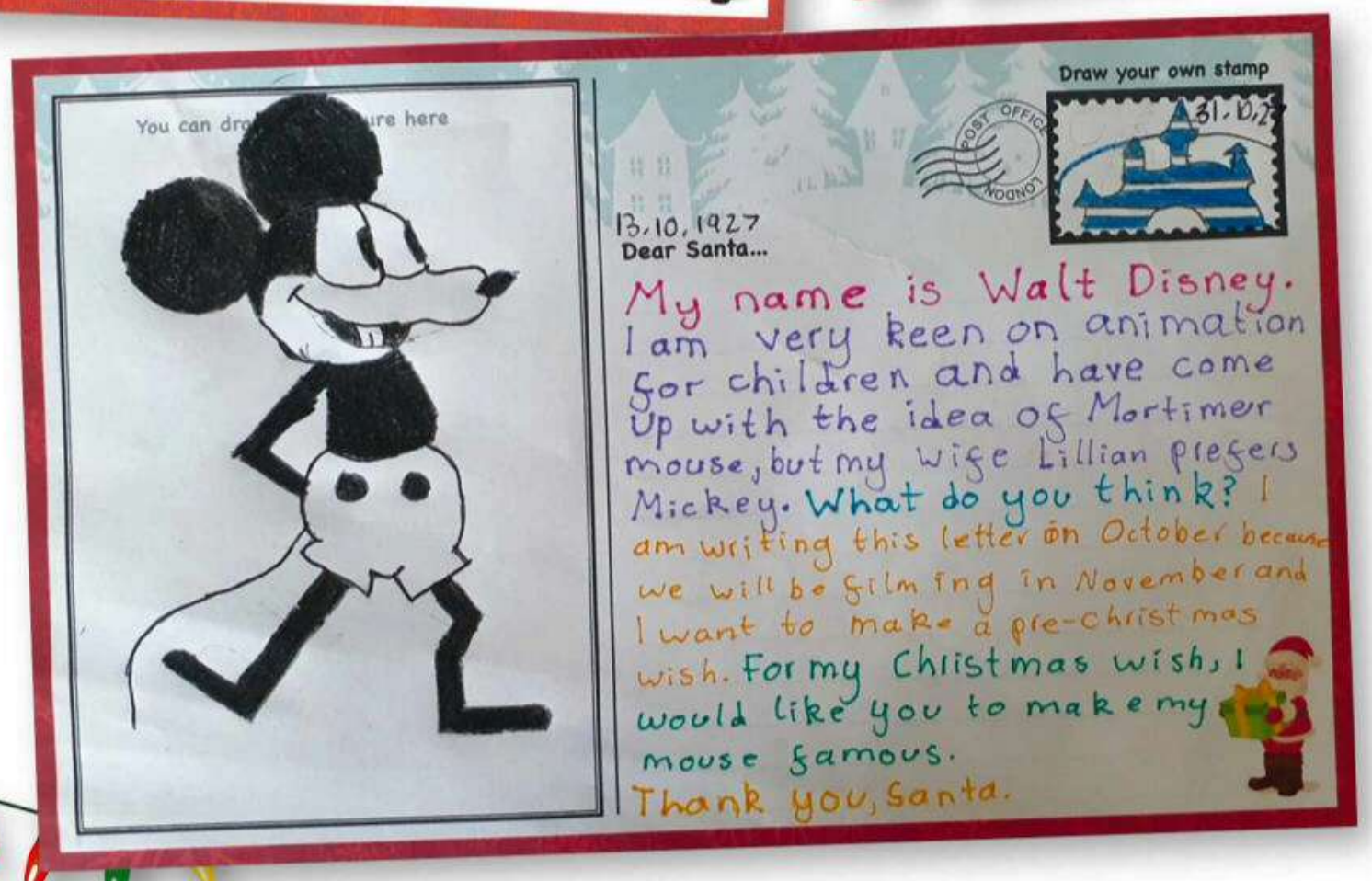
GETTY IMAGES X5

COMPETITION WINNERS

You can draw your picture here
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
I've been very good this year, destroying all the abbeys, killing my wives, and getting rid of the pope. For Christmas, I would like money, France and more power. If you don't give me this, I'll make myself Santa instead.
Worst wishes,
Henry VIII

NAME: **Ben Chick**
AGE: **7**
WRITING AS: **Henry VIII**
JUDGES' COMMENTS:
"Sounds like Henry VIII is probably on Santa's naughty list!"

Dear Santa,
I've been very good this year, destroying the abbeys, killing my wives and getting rid of the pope. For Christmas, I would like money, France and more power. If you don't give me this, I'll make myself Santa instead.
Worst wishes,
Henry VIII


Draw your own stamp
13.10.1927
Dear Santa...
My name is Walt Disney. I am very keen on animation for children and have come up with the idea of Mortimer mouse, but my wife Lillian prefers Mickey. What do you think? I am writing this letter on October because we will be filming in November and I want to make a pre-christmas wish. For my Christmas wish, I would like you to make my mouse famous.
Thank you, Santa.

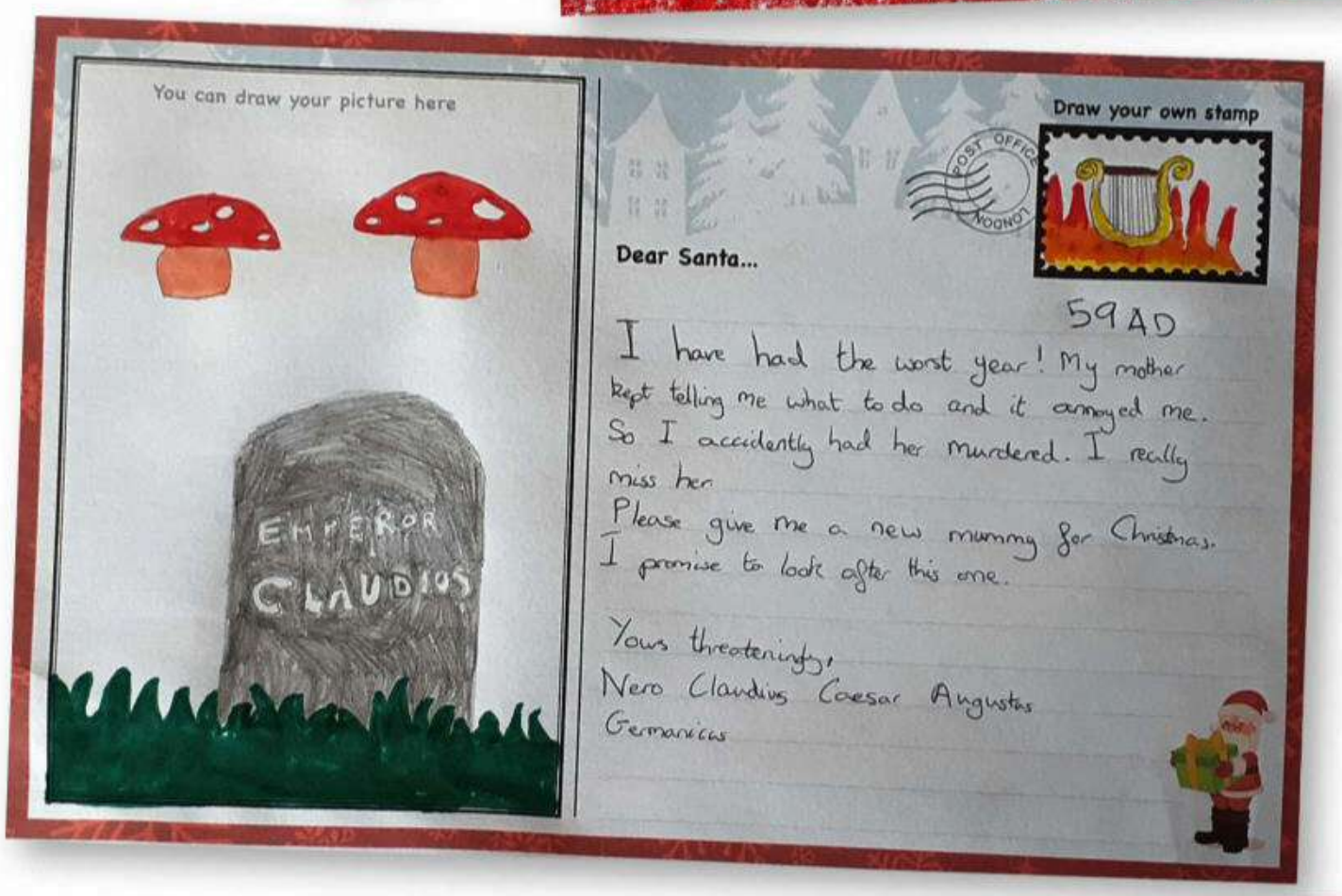
NAME: **Lily Mitchell**
AGE: **12**
WRITING AS: **Walt Disney**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Superb Mickey Mouse drawing!"**

Dear Santa,
My name is Walt Disney. I am very keen on animation for children and have come up with the idea of Mortimer mouse, but my wife, Lillian, prefers Mickey. What do you think? I am writing this letter in October because we will be filming in November and I want to make a pre-Christmas wish. For my Christmas wish, I would like you to make my mouse famous.
Thank you.

NAME: **Evelyn Adams**
AGE: **7**
WRITING AS: **Samuel Pepys**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Fantastic use of imagination"**

Dear Santa,
In September, fire destroyed most of London. I buried my prized wheel of Parmesan cheese in my garden, but when I dug it up, it was covered in maggots! Please may I have a new one for Christmas? And please may you bring a cake for Mrs Pepys because the bakers in Pudding Lane burnt down.
Your sincerely,
Samuel Pepys

You can draw your picture here
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
In septembor fire destroyed most of London. I buried my prized wheel of parmesan cheese in my garden but when I dug it up it was coveredinmaggots! please may I have a new one for christmas? And please may you bring a cake for mrs Pepys because the bakers in Pudding lane burnt down yours sincerely samuel Pepys.

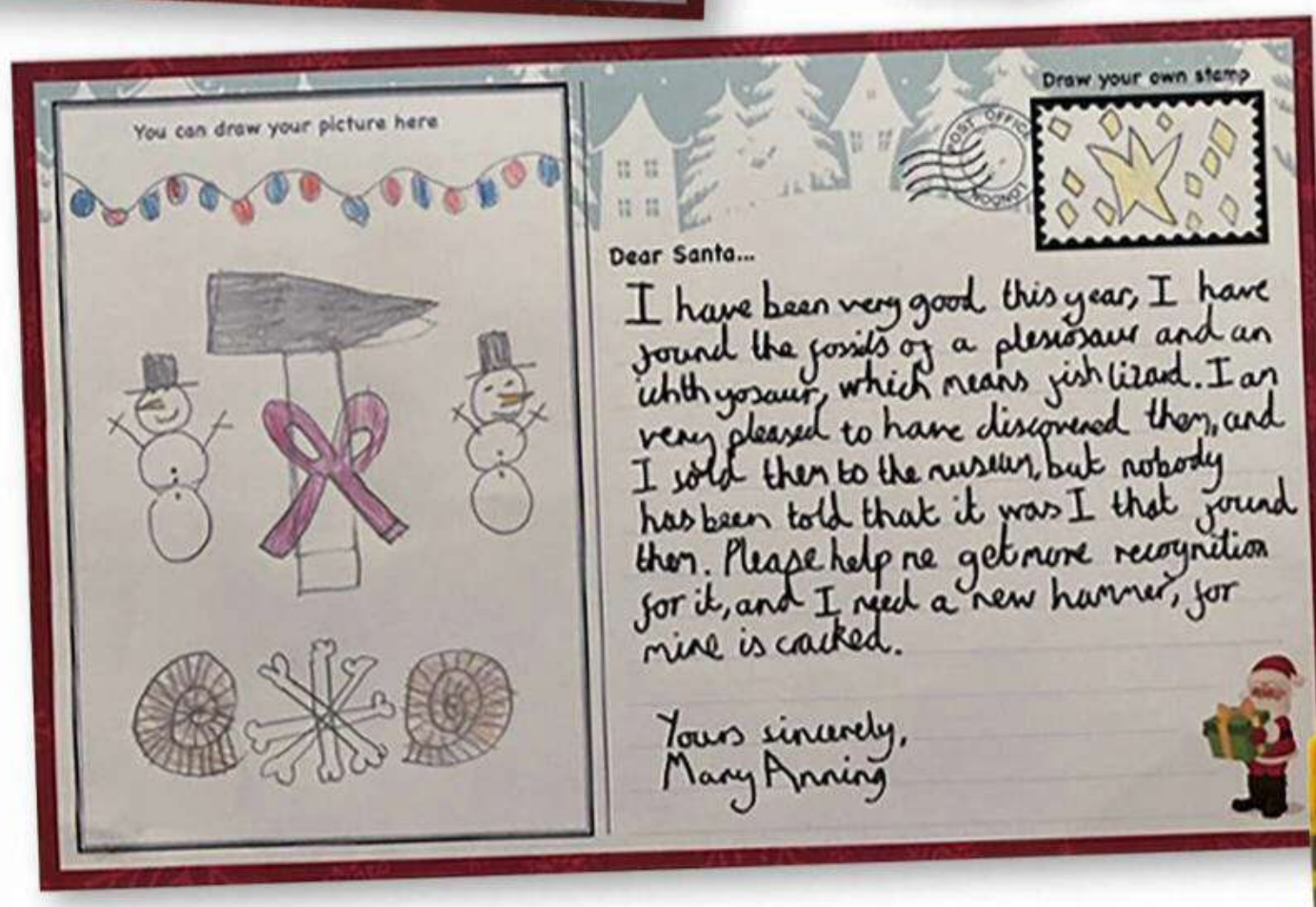

You can draw your picture here
EMPEROR CLAUDIOS
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
59 AD
I have had the worst year! My mother kept telling me what to do and it annoyed me. So I accidently had her murdered. I really miss her.
Please give me a new mummy for Christmas. I promise to look after this one.
Yours threateningly,
Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus

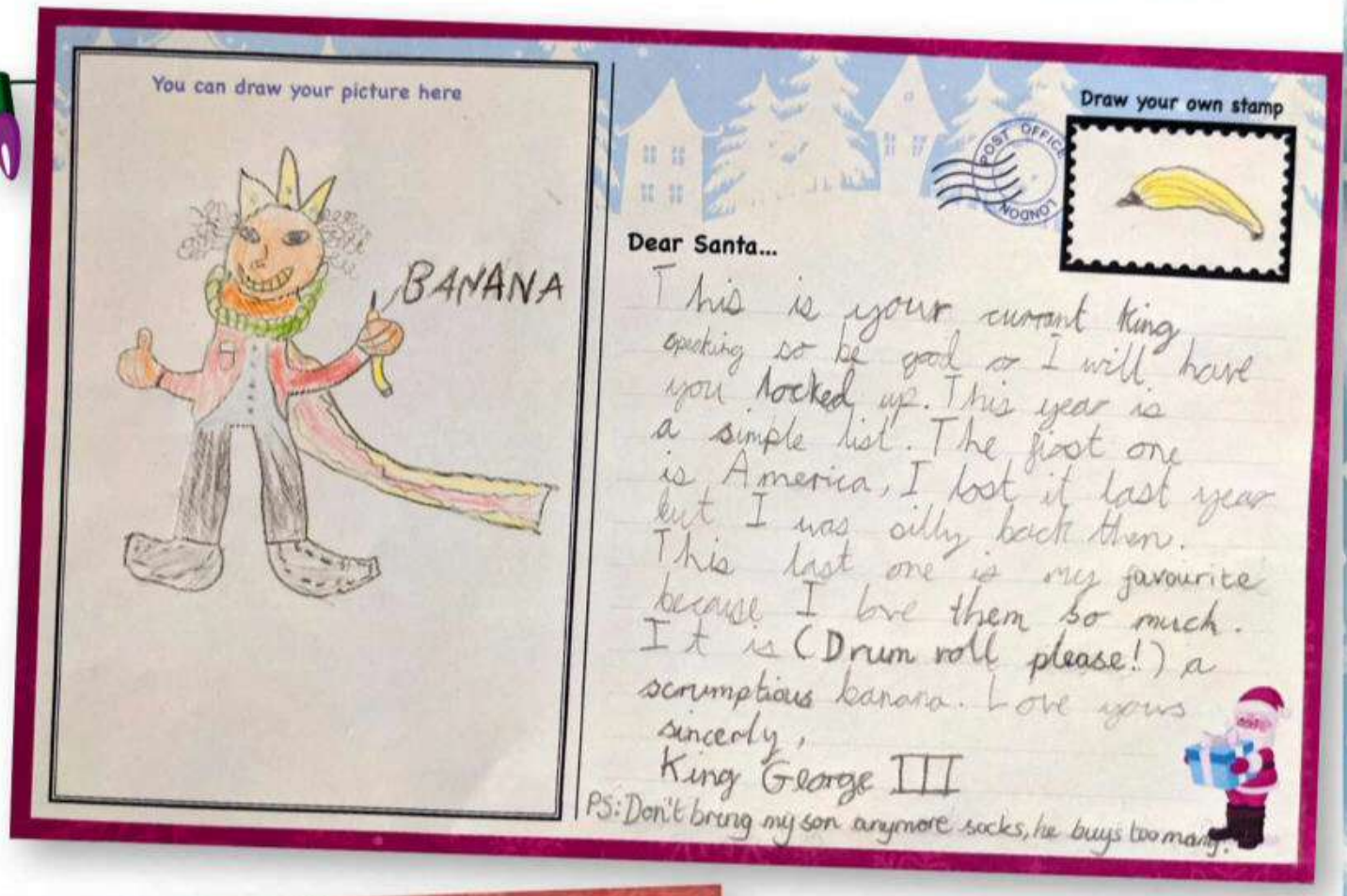
NAME: **Amy Wiggin**
AGE: **12**
WRITING AS: **Emperor Nero**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Mothers everywhere should feel nervous after reading this!"**

Dear Santa,
I have had the worst year! My mother kept telling me what to do and it annoyed me, so I accidentally had her murdered. I really miss her. Please give me a new mummy for Christmas. I promise to look after this one.
Yours threateningly,
Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus

NAME: **Sophie Large**
AGE: **9**
WRITING AS: **Mary Anning**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Great choice of character and a very reasonable Christmas request!"**

Dear Santa,
I have been very good this year. I have found the fossils of a plesiosaur and an ichthyosaur, which means 'fish lizard'. I am very pleased to have discovered them, and I sold them to the museum, but nobody has been told that it was I that found them. Please help me get more recognition for it, and I need a new hammer, for mine is cracked.
Yours sincerely,
Mary Anning

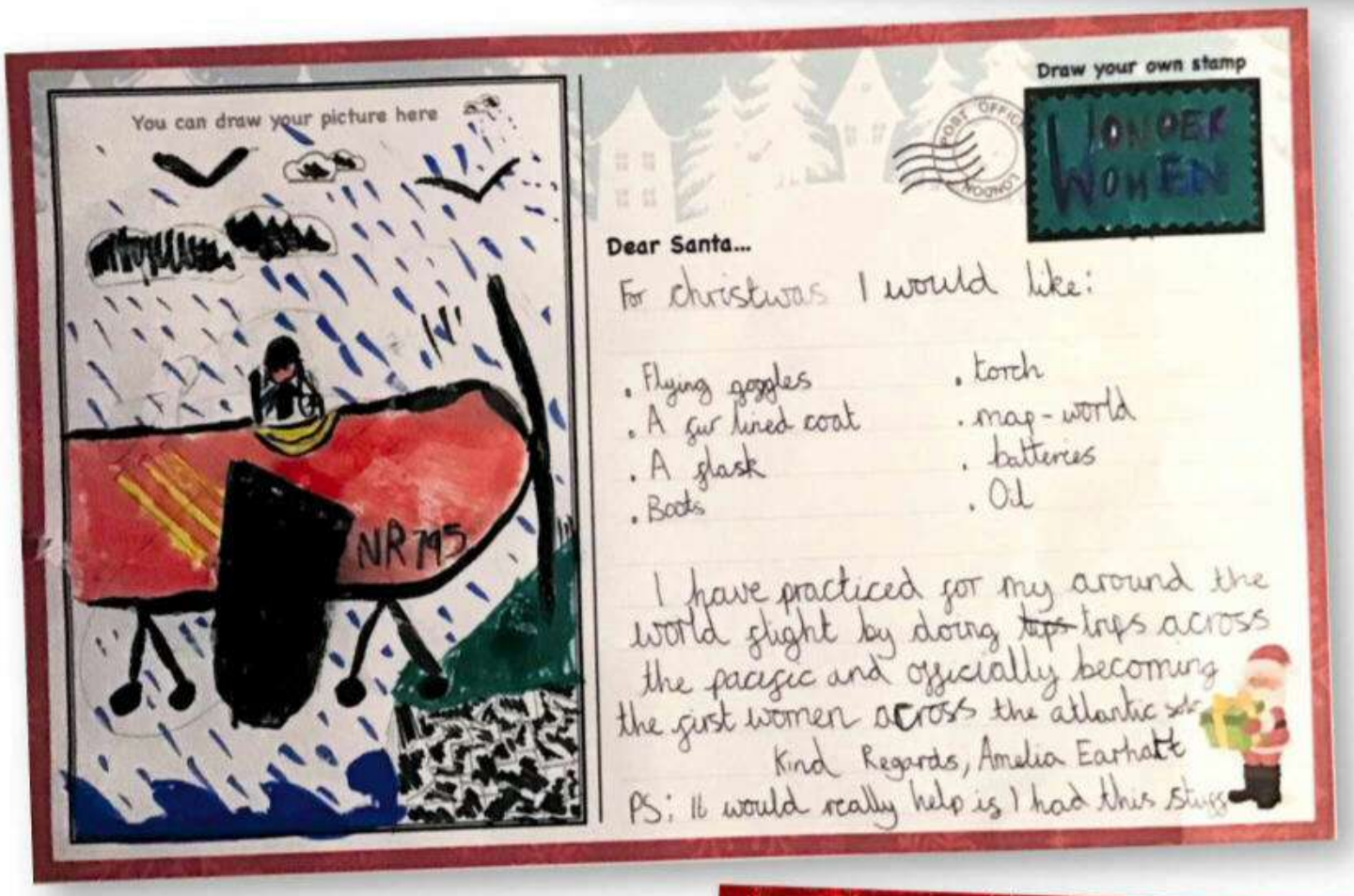

You can draw your picture here
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
I have been very good this year, I have found the fossils of a plesiosaur and an ichthyosaur, which means fish lizard. I am very pleased to have discovered them, and I sold them to the museum, but nobody has been told that it was I that found them. Please help me get more recognition for it, and I need a new hammer, for mine is cracked.
Yours sincerely,
Mary Anning


You can draw your picture here
BANANA
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
This is your current king speaking so be good or I will have you locked up. This year is a simple list. The first one is America, I lost it last year but I was silly back then. This last one is my favourite because I love them so much. It is (Drum roll please!) a scrumptious banana. Love yours sincerely,
King George III
PS: Don't bring my son anymore socks, he buys too many.

NAME: **Scarlett Rose Daniels**
AGE: **10**
WRITING AS: **George III**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Very funny!"**

Dear Santa,
This is your current king speaking, so be good or I will have you locked up. This year is a simple list. The first one is America. I lost it last year but I was silly back then. This last one is my favourite because I love them so much. It is (drum roll, please!) a scrumptious banana.
Yours sincerely,
King George III

P.S. Don't bring my son any more socks, he buys too many.

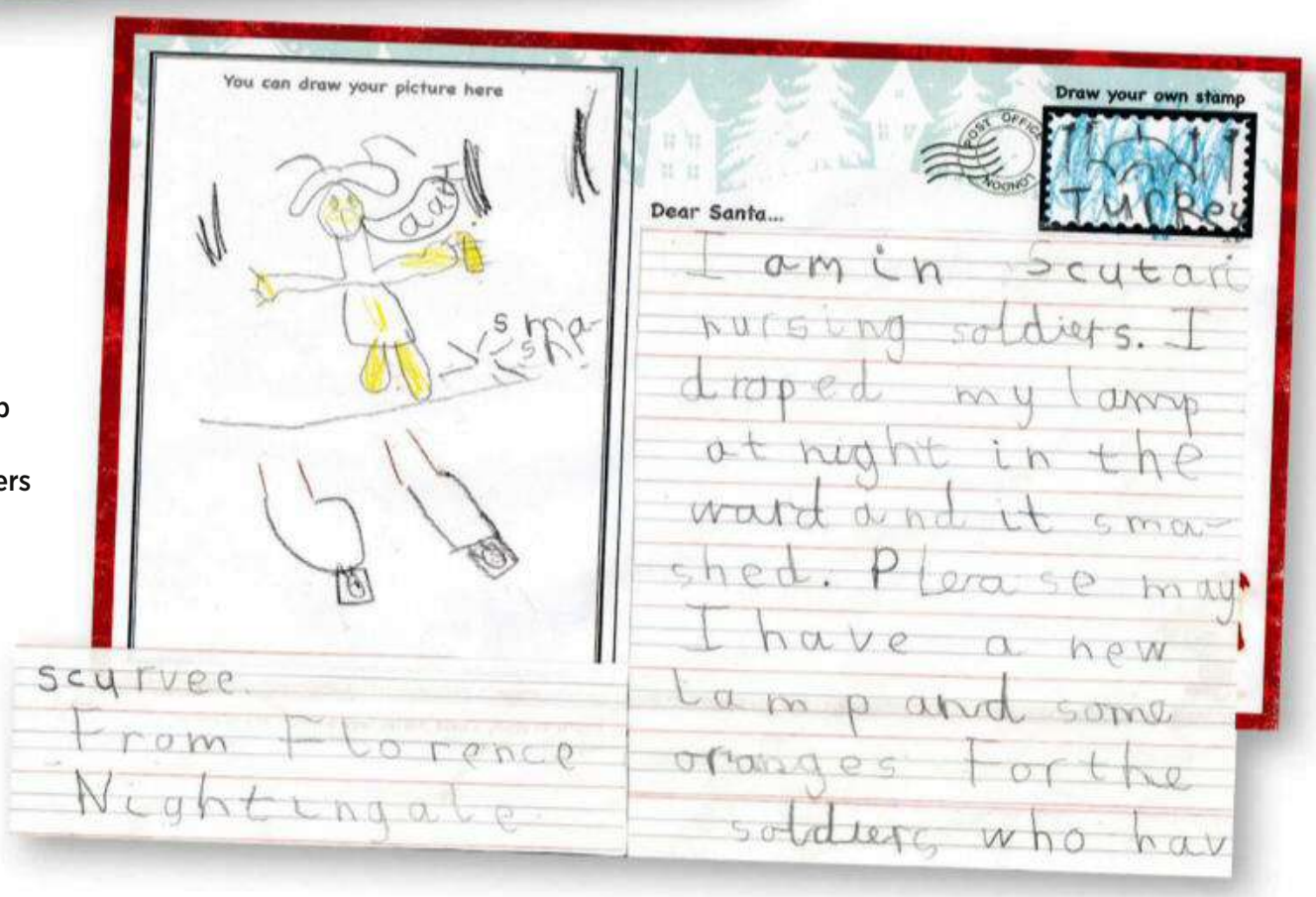

You can draw your picture here
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
For christmas I would like:
. Flying goggles
. A fur lined coat
. A flask
. Boots
. torch
. map - world
. batteries
. Oil
I have practiced for my around the world flight by doing trips across the pacific and officially becoming the first women across the atlantic solo.
Kind Regards, Amelia Earhart
PS: It would really help is I had this stuff

NAME: **Lucy Considine**
AGE: **10**
WRITING AS: **Amelia Earhart**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"Loved the detailed drawing"**

Dear Santa,
For Christmas I would like:
- **Flying goggles**
- **A fur-lined coat**
- **A flask**
- **Boots**
- **Torch**
- **Map of the world**
- **Batteries**
- **Oil**

I have practiced for my around the world flight by doing trips across the Pacific and officially becoming the first woman to cross the Atlantic solo.
Kind regards, Amelia Earhart

P.S. It would really help if I had this stuff.


You can draw your picture here
Draw your own stamp
Dear Santa...
I am in Scutari nursing soldiers. I droped my lamp at night in the ward and it smashed. Please may I have a new lamp and some oranges for the soldiers who hav
scurvee.
From Florence
Nightingale

NAME: **Benedict Adams**
AGE: **6**
WRITING AS: **Florence Nightingale**
JUDGES' COMMENTS: **"The Lady with the Lamp definitely needs her lamp!"**

Dear Santa,
I am in Scutari nursing soldiers. I dropped my lamp at night in the ward and it smashed. Please may I have a new lamp and some oranges for the soldiers who have scurvy?
From Florence Nightingale

GETTY IMAGES X5

WHAT IF... KING EDWARD VIII HADN'T ABDICATED?

Historian and author **Dr Susan Williams** tells **Jonny Wilkes** about the possible outcomes had the lovestruck king married Wallis Simpson while keeping his place on the throne

In 1934, King George V wrote: "After I'm dead, the boy will ruin himself in 12 months." He was talking of his son and heir. Sure enough, less than a year after George passed away on 20 January 1936, Edward VIII had thrust the British monarchy into a constitutional crisis over his desire to marry an American socialite named Wallis Simpson, who had already been divorced once and was seeking a second. Simpson was deemed a wholly inappropriate match for the king, but Edward was not willing to give her up.

Three options were discussed: a full royal marriage; a compromise morganatic marriage, where Simpson would be Edward's wife but not receive the title of queen; or abdication. The Establishment would never have accepted the first, so the only way Edward could have stayed on the throne and with the woman he loved was the compromise. The idea had been put forward by Winston Churchill, a loyal supporter of Edward's.

Dr Susan Williams, author of the book *The People's King* and historical advisor to the National Archives when official records relating to the abdication were made public in 2003, says that it was Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin who stymied that hope. "He gave Edward incomplete information about the views of the Dominions (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and Ireland) on the morganatic marriage plan. In effect, Baldwin bounced Edward off the throne."

There were other concerns about the new king's attitude separate from his affair with Simpson, which troubled the likes of Baldwin. In November 1936, Edward paid a visit to the coal mining communities of south Wales, which were blighted by high levels of poverty and unemployment. When the king commented that "something must be done" to help the poor, the moment was captured on newsreels and seen all over the nation something that infuriated those in power. "The incident only helped influence the Establishment against him and increase their wish to see him off the throne," says Williams.

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

Conversely, the king's sense of connection with ordinary people only served to boost his popularity among the general public. Indeed, at the start of his reign, Edward's modern approach to monarchy enjoyed a groundswell of support in Britain and across the empire. If he had managed to secure the morganatic marriage, there is every reason to believe that, outside of the Establishment, his reputation would not have been badly damaged. Williams adds: "Judging by the documentary evidence available, many would have been delighted for Edward to marry Wallis there was widespread sorrow when he abdicated."

While newspapers like *The Times* and *Telegraph* opposed the marriage plan, mass circulation papers such as the *Express* and *Daily Mail* were in favour. Edward's younger brother Bertie, who became King George VI after the abdication, feared his sibling's popularity could lead to a rival royal court in Britain, which was why he pushed him to go into exile. Williams says this concern, particularly around the time of Bertie's coronation, was well founded: "According to Mass Observation [a social research project] many people resented the new king and wanted Edward back."

Regarding Simpson, perhaps it is possible to consider the public's attitudes towards other outsiders in the royal family – such as Diana, Princess

IN CONTEXT

On 11 December 1936, King Edward VIII announced in a BBC radio broadcast that he had abdicated, less than a year after taking the throne. It was the culmination of a constitutional crisis brought about by his affair with married American socialite Wallis Simpson, which had begun in the early 1930s while he was Prince of Wales. Their relationship, and plans to marry, were opposed by the royal, political and religious establishment of Britain.

Despite having support from the public and some politicians like Winston Churchill, Edward was unable to reach any agreement with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, so chose Simpson over the crown. He signed the Instrument of Abdication the day before the broadcast, enabling his brother Prince Albert (known as 'Bertie'), to ascend the throne as King George VI. Edward and Simpson went into exile with the titles of Duke and Duchess of Windsor and married in June 1937.

Londoners gather to read about Edward's abdication at a newsstand in Parliament Square

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

"THERE IS EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT EDWARD'S REPUTATION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BADLY DAMAGED"

MAIN: **Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson (by then Duke and Duchess of Windsor) pictured in Miami in 1941 – five years after their clandestine relationship triggered a constitutional crisis**

INSET: **The king meets unemployed men in Abertillery, November 1936. Edward's vocal sympathy for the poor – at a time of growing economic inequality in Britain – drew the ire of the Establishment**

of Wales, or Meghan, Duchess of Sussex to try and guess the response she would have had as Edward's wife. "Wallis might have introduced a breath of fresh air and openness into the royal court," suggests Williams. "She had grown up in relative poverty. At a time of huge social inequality in Britain, this was widely appreciated."

FACT VERSUS FICTION

Something that arises when considering Edward's reign beyond 1936 is World War II. Perhaps fuelled by the king's negative portrayals in period dramas such as *The Crown*, there is a growing belief among people today that Edward and Wallis secretly harboured pro Nazi sympathies. But this is a misnomer, Williams asserts:

"When the official records relating to the abdication were released in 2003, there was nothing to substantiate allegations that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (as they became after Edward's abdication) were considered by the government to represent such a risk. Even if Edward *had* wanted to exert influence, this was impossible: he was a constitutional monarch and foreign policy was for the government to decide."

In the case of the abdication not occurring, Edward would have stayed on the throne until his death in 1972, at which time his eldest niece would have succeeded as Queen Elizabeth II (assuming that Bertie, who suffered from lung cancer, still passed away in 1952). Although the line of succession would have remained exactly the same, Elizabeth would not hold the title of Britain's longest serving monarch a feat she achieved in 2015, when she surpassed Queen Victoria's record of 63 years and 216 days on the throne.

"Edward has been perceived as the antithesis to Elizabeth II and what she stands for," says Williams. "But there is an important parallel between them. Like Elizabeth, Edward had a strong sense of duty and a commitment to parliamentary democracy. It is reasonable to assume that if he had ruled until 1972, he would have maintained the same patterns of duty and service that he had shown as Prince of Wales and then as king in 1936."

LISTEN

BBC RADIO 4 A documentary presented by Heather Jones, *The Frontline Prince*, explores Edward VIII's experiences of World War I: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0952jkk*

NEXT MONTH

What if... Britain had stayed neutral during World War I?

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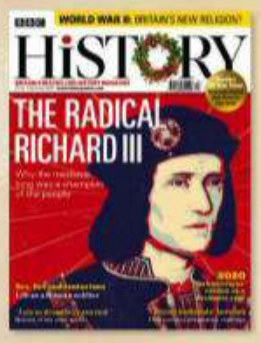

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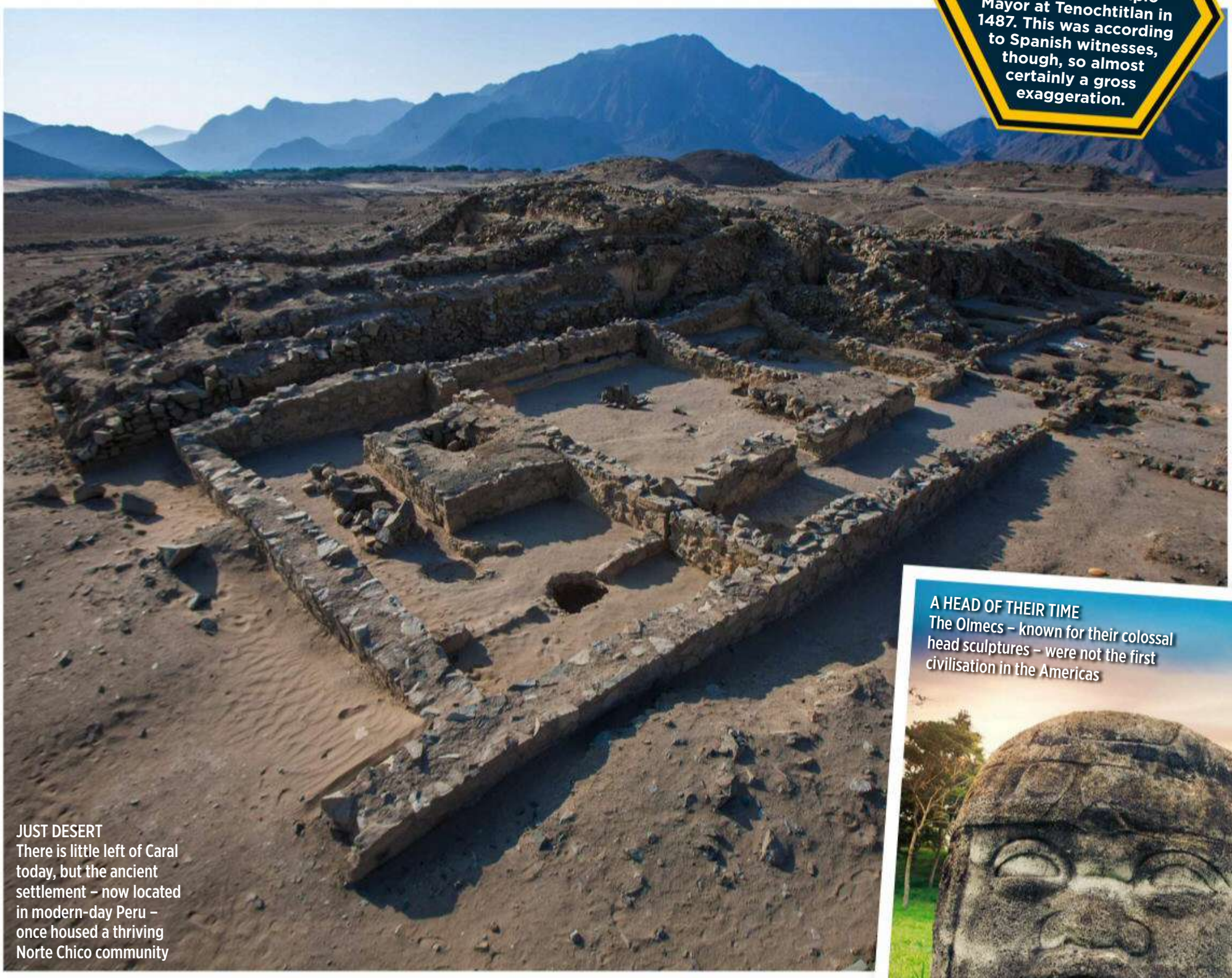
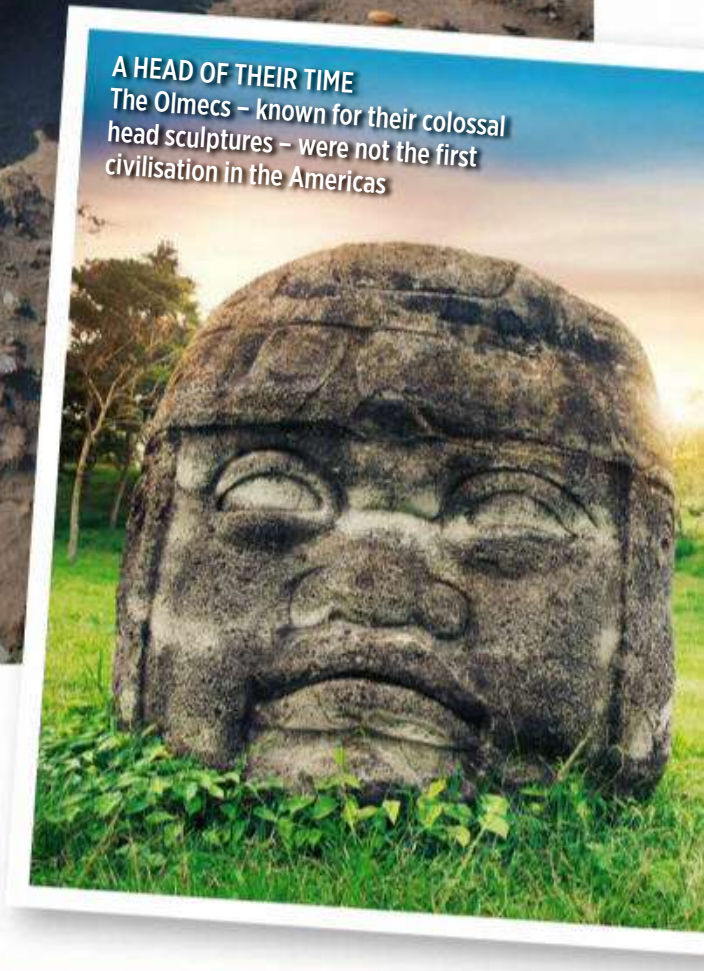
84,000

The number of sacrifices made by the Aztecs to dedicate the Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlan in 1487. This was according to Spanish witnesses, though, so almost certainly a gross exaggeration.



JUST DESERT
There is little left of Caral today, but the ancient settlement – now located in modern-day Peru – once housed a thriving Norte Chico community



A HEAD OF THEIR TIME
The Olmecs – known for their colossal head sculptures – were not the first civilisation in the Americas

Are the Olmecs the oldest American civilisation?

SHORT ANSWER Not by about two millennia: the Norte Chico were the *real* ancients in the Americas

LONG ANSWER The Olmecs certainly were the first major civilisation of Mesoamerica, emerging c1200 BC in the modern-day Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco, and laying the groundwork for others like the Maya and Aztec. They were not the oldest in the Americas, though, and if you thought there was still so much we didn't know about the Olmecs (beyond the huge heads they carved), then get ready to know even less about the Norte Chico.

Radiocarbon dating places this civilisation thousands of years earlier than the Olmecs, appearing from the fourth millennium BC. Their society was based on agriculture, irrigation and fishing between the north and central coast regions of modern Peru and inland along four rivers, the Fortaleza, Pativilca, Huaura and Supe.

Yet these were no ordinary farming and fishing people. The Norte Chico were monumental builders, erecting huge pyramids around the same time as the Egyptians, if not even earlier. The capital city, Caral, featured six of their terraced rectangular pyramids, as well as amphitheatres, plazas and residential buildings – enough to accommodate some 3,000 people.

As archaeological research into the Norte Chico, who declined around 1800 BC, only began in earnest in the 1990s, there is still a great deal more to discover about the oldest civilisation in the Americas.

GETTY IMAGES X2

WHEELY GOOD FUN
Although this modern illustration suggests otherwise, women in ancient Greece (and Rome) weren't allowed to race chariots

Could women compete in the ancient Olympics?

SHORT ANSWER Not only could they not take part, most women weren't even allowed into the arena

LONG ANSWER Kyniska, a Spartan princess, was the first woman to win at the ancient Olympics, twice claiming the equivalent of a gold medal (a crown of olive leaves) in the *tethrippon*, or four-horse chariot racing, in 396 and 392 BC. This was something of a loophole as she won on account of owning and breeding the horses, not taking part in the actual games.

In truth, women could not participate in the ancient Olympics (or even watch, if they were married) on penalty of death. The only female spectators allowed were young unmarried women and the priestess of Demeter, who was given a place of honour next to the altar.

The restriction didn't stop one determined mother sneaking in, though. Kallipateira of Rhodes disguised herself as a male trainer so she could watch her son in the boxing. When caught, she wasn't punished her grandfather was a king, after all but the rules were changed so that trainers were required to strip before entering the arena to prove their manhood.

102

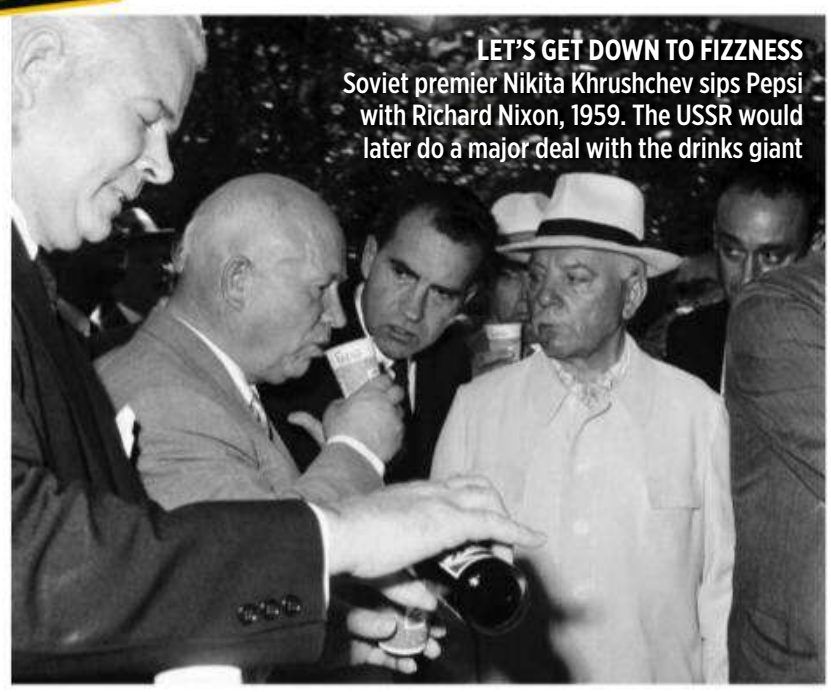
The number of years, ending in 2006, Japan was technically at war with Montenegro since the latter had not been mentioned in the peace treaty that ended the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05).

Is it true that Pepsi once had a navy?

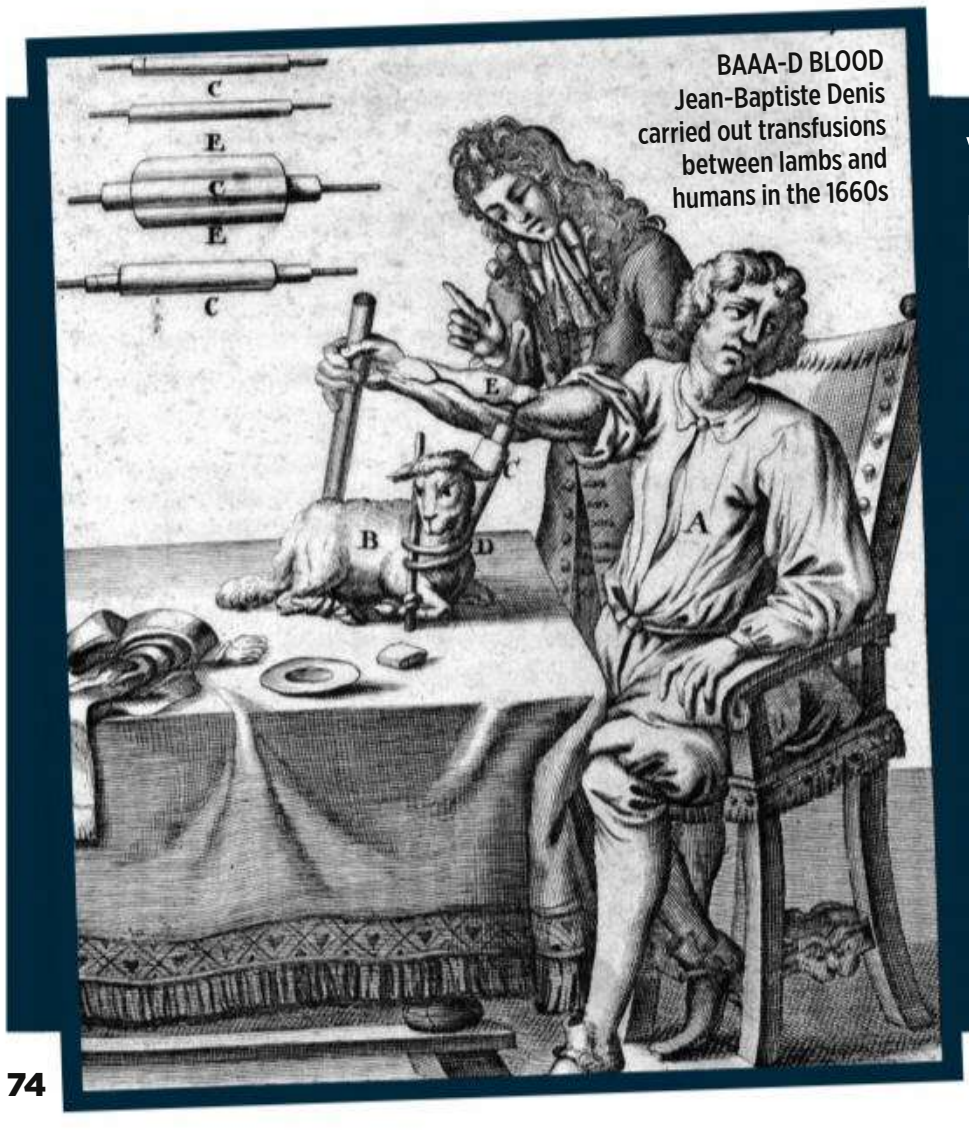
SHORT ANSWER While it may not have been the most intimidating flotilla, Pepsi was an unusual naval power

LONG ANSWER The fizzy drink giant Pepsi made a bizarre deal in 1990 that put them in possession of a navy, which must have given the folks at Coca-Cola some sleepless nights. Pepsi had been trading with the Soviet Union for years, sending huge shipments in return for vodka. But as the communist state neared collapse at the end of the 1980s, the Soviets turned to desperate measures to keep the beverage flowing and offered naval ships instead.

Pepsi agreed a deal for three warships, 17 submarines and some oil tankers. In truth, the fleet was hardly seaworthy, and it was mostly sold off for scrap, but that didn't stop Pepsi CEO Donald Kendall gloating to the US government: "We're disarming the Soviet Union faster than you are."



LET'S GET DOWN TO FIZZNESS
Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev sips Pepsi with Richard Nixon, 1959. The USSR would later do a major deal with the drinks giant



BAAA-D BLOOD
Jean-Baptiste Denis carried out transfusions between lambs and humans in the 1660s

When was the first blood transfusion?

SHORT ANSWER In 1667, although this turned out to be a bit of a woolly procedure...

LONG ANSWER The event that led medical science towards blood transfusions was when English physician William Harvey described, for the first time, the circulation of blood and published his findings in 1628. This led to experiments on animals, with Richard Lower performing a transfusion between dogs in 1665.

Then a year later, on 15 June 1667, Jean-Baptiste Denis, physician to King Louis XIV of France, carried out a transfusion with a human by giving a sickly boy a dose of lamb's blood – miraculously, the boy lived. Denis kept experimenting, undeterred when some patients died during and after the procedure.

Not everyone was happy, though, and the Royal Society, the French government and even the Vatican banned transfusions. The science stagnated for centuries. Although, this may have been a good thing considering that it was only in the early 20th century that the distinct blood types were discovered.

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3, WELLCOME IMAGES X1

MAKING A REVOLUTION
A 1927 snap of Gandhi at a spinning wheel – a symbol he wanted on India's national flag

Why is there a wheel on India's flag?

SHORT ANSWER **Before the Buddhist symbol seen today, the flag featured a spinning wheel inspired by Gandhi**

LONG ANSWER In the early 1920s, the independence movement to end British rule in India found a figurehead in a lawyer named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Committed to non-violent civil disobedience, which set an example for the world throughout the 20th century, Gandhi understood the vital importance of symbols.

He dressed in a loincloth and shawl to identify with India's traditional culture and rural poor, and he vehemently promoted the use of a spinning wheel, or *charkha*, as a way of boycotting British goods. To the movement, the *charkha* embodied India's economic freedom and self-reliance.

So when a man named Pingali Venkayya designed a new flag for an independent India, it inevitably featured a spinning wheel on top of two bars, one red to represent Hindus and one green for Muslims. Gandhi modified the flag to include a white bar to stand for the other religions, and this flag (with the red changed to a deep saffron) was then adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931.

When the final flag was designed in 1947, in time for independence, the *charkha* was replaced by the Ashoka Chakra, a 24-spoked wheel that was a key Buddhist symbol. Gandhi wasn't that happy about losing the spinning wheel, but accepted it.

DID YOU KNOW?

ON THE HOOF

When published in 1745–46, *Nowe Ateny* – the first Polish-language encyclopedia – featured some rather blunt definitions, such as "Goats are a stinking kind of animal" and "Horses: everyone knows what a horse is".

CABBAGE CURES

Such was his love for the nutritional and medical benefits of cabbages that Cato, the Roman historian and orator, recommended bathing babies in the urine of someone who ate lots of the vegetable, to stop them getting sick.

ISAAC NEWTON MP

Isaac Newton stood for election as a Member of Parliament in 1689 and again in 1701, but during his two brief terms he appears on the parliamentary record just once – to complain of a draught and request a window be closed.

THE LAST POST

In 1829, in a village near Mansfield, one woman's dying wish was for her friend to place her son's letters in her coffin. The friend forgot, but when the local postman died soon afterwards, they buried the letters with him instead, so he could 'deliver' them.

What was the bonnacon?

SHORT ANSWER **A mythical bull with a malodourous method of attack**

LONG ANSWER Medieval bestiaries are a delight to look through: wonderful compendiums of real and imagined creatures described as roaming in far-off lands. Inside, you might find beasts such as the leucrocotta, a hyena-like dog capable of imitating human speech, or perhaps the onager, a type of donkey with the ability to predict the spring equinox.

Most of the hard-to-believe beasts came with a religious or moral allegory attached, but then there was the bonnacon, where it's possible the medieval scribes were just having some fun. Resembling a bull but with its horns curving inwards, the bonnacon attacked its enemies by spraying them with explosive excrement that scorched everything it touched. That is why, in many bestiary illustrations, humans approaching a bonnacon were depicted wearing armour – although a peg for the nose might have been quite handy, too.

ATTACKING FROM THE REAR
A 13th-century illustration of a bonnacon deploying its 'weapon'

Why is it called Westward Ho!?

SHORT ANSWER **A bestselling novel inspired the only place in Britain with punctuation in its name**

LONG ANSWER The small Devon coastal village got its name from the title of an 1855 novel by Charles Kingsley. Set in nearby Bideford, the bestseller led to a rise in visitors to the area and a tourism opportunity was spotted. It began with a hotel being renamed the Westward Ho! Hotel and ended with the development of a whole town named with the adventure-seeking phrase in order to satisfy the Victorian love of being by the seaside. But Westward Ho! is not the only town with an exclamation mark. There's actually a place in Quebec with two: Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha!

THE SPY WHO BLUFFED ME
The passport of Serbian double agent Duško Popov – a rumoured influence for the character of James Bond

626
The total number of human figures depicted on the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry, along with 190 horses and 35 dogs.

Was there a real spy called James Bond?

SHORT ANSWER Author Ian Fleming was less inspired by the real-life Bonds than he was a bird expert

LONG ANSWER There has been an ongoing discussion about the real spies that may have inspired the character of James Bond. They were men Ian Fleming worked with in Naval Intelligence during World War II, including playboy adventurer Sir William Stephenson and Serbian double agent Duško Popov, who fed the Germans false information while reporting for MI6.

The theories got shaken, not stirred, with the unearthing of two spies with the actual name: James Charles Bond, a member of the Special Operations Executive under Fleming, and James Albert Bond, who worked in Poland.

The truth, however, is that the superspy was not based on a real James Bond, but Fleming himself with some extra razzle dazzle thrown in. As for the name, Fleming wanted something ordinary, and as a keen birdwatcher he owned a copy of *Birds of the West Indies* by esteemed ornithologist… James Bond.

Who invented the bikini?

SHORT ANSWER A French engineer unafraid of causing a scandal

LONG ANSWER Combine a greater sense of liberation and freedom after World War II, the first summer in peacetime for years, and continuing short supplies of materials, and you have the perfect mix for a daring new outfit. On 5 July 1946, French engineer Louis Réard unveiled his invention, the bikini, at a Paris swimming pool. Another designer, Jacques Heim, had claimed to have made the world's smallest bathing suit, named the 'Atome' after the atom, but Reard's two-piece was smaller, using just 30 inches of fabric. It caused a sensation when modelled by teenage exotic dancer Micheline Bernadini, which Reard knew it would. After all, he named the swimwear after the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific, where the US had tested atomic bombs just four days earlier.

UNDRESSED TO IMPRESS
Dancer Micheline Bernadini (*right*) poses in the world's very first bikini – the creation of Louis Réard (*above*)

A DIFFERENT KIND OF RUSH HOUR
Thousands of 'Boomers' scrambled to claim a free patch of Oklahoma land on 22 April 1889 – but only once the Native Americans living there had been forcibly removed

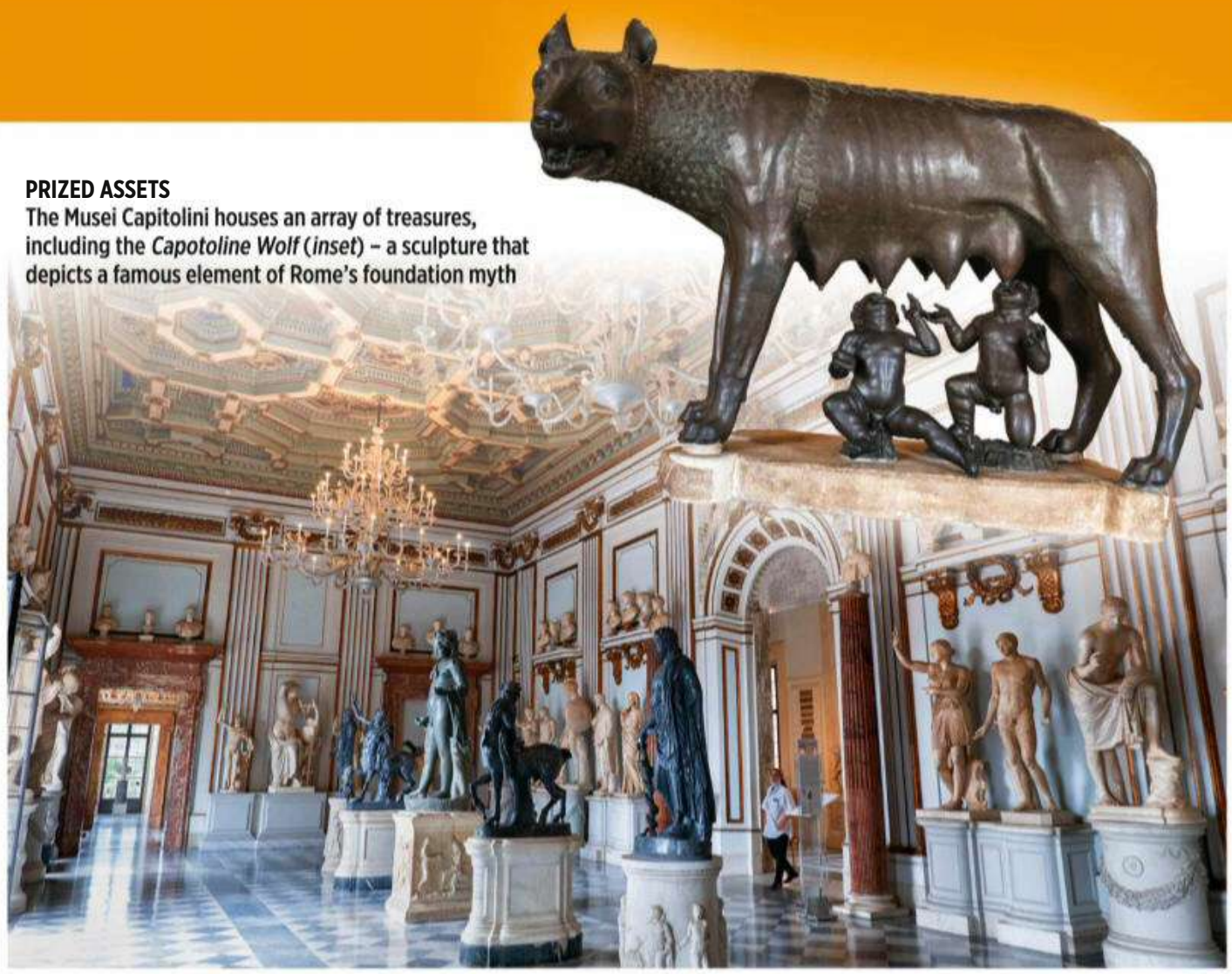
What were 'Boomers' and 'Sooners'?

SHORT ANSWER This is not a case of "OK Boomer", more a matter of Boomers in OK

LONG ANSWER By signing the Indian Appropriations Act of 1889, President Grover Cleveland opened up nearly 2 million acres of Oklahoma territory for settlement. (The Native American peoples living there had conveniently been removed.) People would be able to head onto the land at noon on 22 April 1889, and they sure were desperate to claim their spot.

Around 50,000 settlers lined the border and, at the sound of cannons and bugles at high noon, raced into the so-called Unassigned Lands to claim the 160 acres that they were entitled to. By the end of that day, Oklahoma City had been founded and already had a 10,000-strong population. 'Boomers' was the name given to those doing the rushing in the Oklahoma Land Rush, but they may have been beaten to the best plots by 'Sooners', the people who illegally entered the land early. Today, those names live on in Oklahoma sports teams.

GETTY X3, ALAMY X4, YASUKE BY ANTHONY AZEKWOH



PRIZED ASSETS
The Musei Capitolini houses an array of treasures, including the *Capotoline Wolf* (*inset*) – a sculpture that depicts a famous element of Rome's foundation myth

What is the world's oldest museum?

SHORT ANSWER The Capitoline Museum has been around the longest... but not actually open the longest

LONG ANSWER Ennigaldi-Nanna, daughter of a neo-Babylonian king in modern-day Iraq, is often credited as the first museum curator in history, building a collection of artefacts and presenting them, complete with explanatory labels, in c530 BC. Her museum doesn't get many visitors these days, having been lost to the sands and only excavated in the 20th century.

Instead, the oldest still intact is in Rome – in fact, the top two are there. Pope Sixtus IV, builder of the Sistine Chapel and founder of the Vatican Archives, was a passionate patron of the arts. Ignoring the nepotism, scandal and involvement in assassinations that riddled his papacy, he helped Rome grow into a centre of the Renaissance, with a shiny new museum to prove it.

The Musei Capitolini began in 1471 with his ancient bronze sculptures, including the *Capitoline Wolf*, the famous scene of baby twins Romulus and Remus suckling a mother wolf. Dedicated to the people of Rome, it claims the title as the world's oldest museum, followed by the Vatican Museums in 1506. But while its collection of works swelled, it wasn't open to the public until 1734. By then, other museums had sprouted up across Europe, including the Ashmolean in Oxford, unveiled in 1683.

When was the term 'vegetarian' coined?

SHORT ANSWER Until the mid-19th century, non-meat eaters were named after Pythagoras

LONG ANSWER The Vegetarian Society formed in Ramsgate, Kent, in 1847. That may not seem like a momentous landmark seeing as people all over the world had been going meat free since antiquity but it may have been a name changer for the veggie only crowd. That society is commonly cited as giving root to the term 'vegetarian'. Before then, those who didn't eat meat were usually referred to their diets as 'Pythagorean' after the ancient Greek philosopher, Pythagoras. Now best known for his triangle theorem taught in mathematics, he enjoyed a long reputation, perhaps erroneously, for adhering to a strict vegetarian diet.

Were there any non-Japanese samurai?

SHORT ANSWER An African slave would have stood out in the ranks of the elite Japanese warrior class

LONG ANSWER A handful of foreign visitors to Japan were honoured as samurai, including Englishman William Adams and his Dutch shipmate Jan Joosten van Lodensteijn, who were both granted the title of *hatamoto* (a high-ranking samurai).

The first and most famous was not a trader, diplomat or explorer, but a slave. Yasuke, possibly from modern-day Mozambique or South Sudan, was in the service of an Italian Jesuit missionary when he arrived in 1579. Japanese people had not seen men as tall and strong as Yasuke, or a person of his colour, so turned out in droves to see him.

Soon, he was being summoned to meet Oda Nobunaga, a warlord who was so impressed by the African that he took him into his own service. Yasuke was given money, a home and a *katana* sword, the weapon of a samurai warrior, and became Nobunaga's faithful retainer, or *kashin*.

BIG IN JAPAN
A modern imagining of Yasuke, an African slave who gained fame and respect far from home

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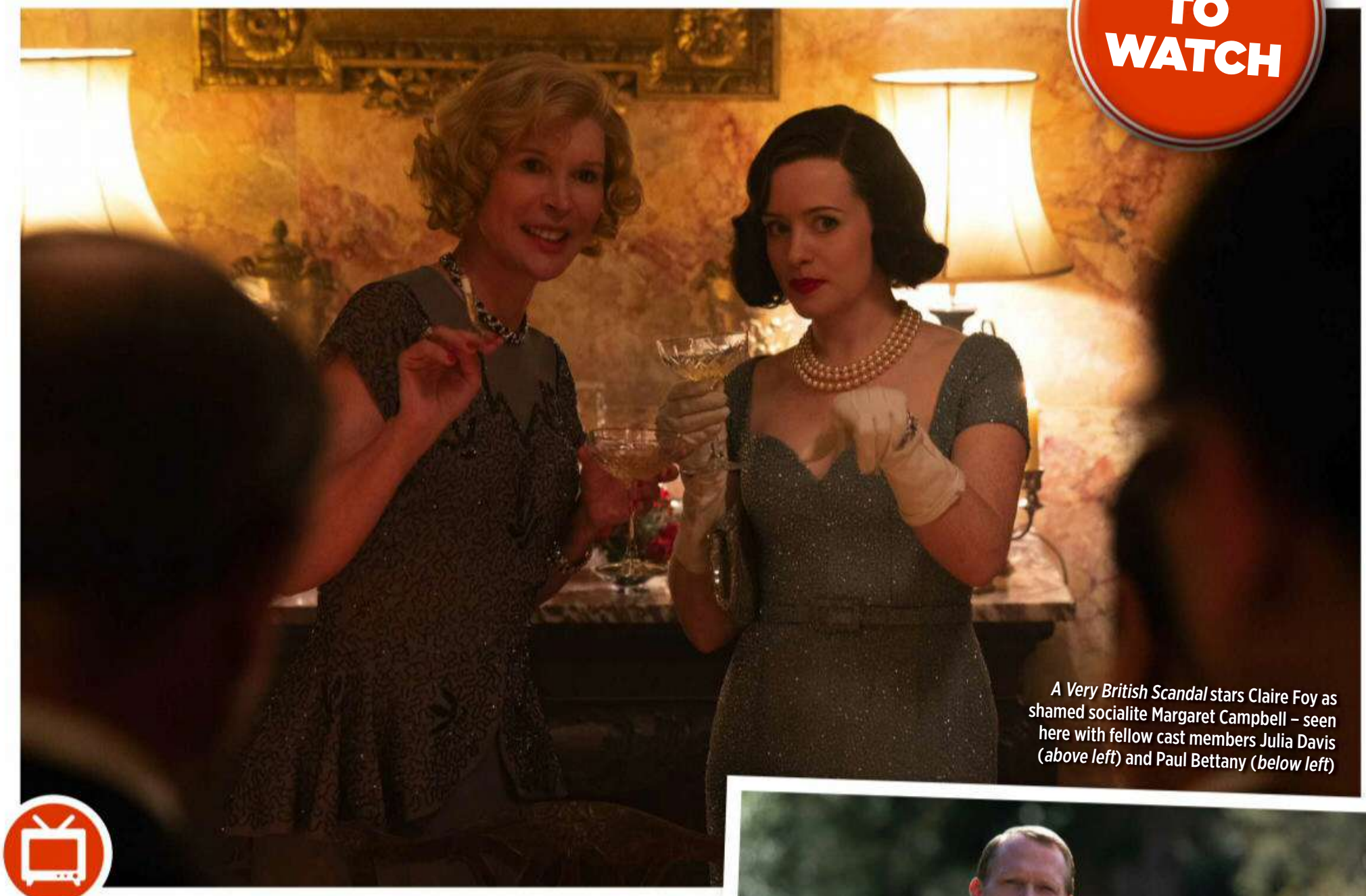


A Very British Scandal stars Claire Foy as shamed socialite Margaret Campbell – seen here with fellow cast members Julia Davis (*above left*) and Paul Bettany (*below left*)

Grace under pressure

A Very British Scandal / BBC One, December

It was a divorce that gripped the attention of much of the nation. In 1963, having found compromising pictures of his wife, the famed socialite Margaret Campbell (née Whigham), Ian Campbell, 11th Duke of Argyll went to court to end his third marriage.

Before long, Margaret's name would be dragged through the mud amidst lurid tales of law-breaking, violence, drug-taking and infidelity. One explicit image in particular, obtained by the duke when he employed a locksmith to break into a cupboard in the couple's Mayfair home, became notorious. In court, presiding judge Lord Wheatley described Margaret as "a completely promiscuous woman whose sexual appetite could only be satisfied with a number of men".

But how fair was this assessment? Scriptwriter Sarah Phelps (*The Pale Horse*) has long been fascinated with the couple's divorce and sees Margaret in different terms. When *A Very British Scandal*, made by the same production company behind the award-winning *A Very English Scandal*, was announced, she said the story had been a "passion project" for her since 1993. "I felt very strongly that [Margaret had] been punished for being a woman, for being visible, for refusing to back down, be a good girl and go quietly," Phelps noted. "This drama is my tribute to her."

Underpinning these words is the idea that post-World War II British society was a place of double standards and sexism in its attitudes towards women, and perhaps even institutionally misogynistic.

Leading the cast as Margaret, and playing her as someone who acted with dignity and resilience through experiences that would have broken many people, is Claire Foy (*The Crown*). Hollywood star Paul Bettany, best known as Vision in the Marvel films and subsequent *WandaVision* TV series, plays the duke. The cast also features Julia Davis (*Nighty Night*) as Maureen, Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava.

BLUEPRINT PICTURES X2

The Pilgrims' voyage to the New World – and their reasons for leaving Europe – are examined in a film by Ric Burns

Women from the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) are drafted in to repair a bus during World War II. The lives of ATS women are explored in a new documentary, featuring veterans such as gunner Grace Taylor (*inset*)

New World odyssey

The Pilgrims / PBS America, Thursday 25 November

The story of the Pilgrims is one of the foundational myths of the United States. It's integral to Thanksgiving, the holiday so often associated with tales of the 1621 celebration at the Plymouth Colony, when the settlers marked bringing in their first harvest.

But who exactly were the Pilgrims? What was it about their lives in Europe that made them want to travel to the New World? And what was their role in the birth of American democracy?

These are questions that lie at the centre of *The Pilgrims*, a feature-length documentary directed by Ric Burns. Covering the 70 years between 1560 and 1630, it's a story that takes in religious persecution in England and exile in the Netherlands, as well as the colonisation of Massachusetts on land occupied by the Patuxet, Native Americans whose population was decimated by imported diseases.

Women at war

The Army Girls / BBC Radio 4, December

By late 1941, the United Kingdom was a country with a single aim: to defeat the Axis powers. This required the whole of society to be mobilised and so it was, 80 years ago in December, the government passed the National Service Act (No 2), which for the first time conscripted women – initially childless widows and single women between the ages of 20 and 30.

Most of those called up served with the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), a branch of the British Army formed in 1938. By the end of the conflict, the ATS employed 190,000 women. Its most famous recruits included Princess Elizabeth, who trained as a lorry driver and mechanic, and Winston Churchill's youngest daughter, Mary.

While you would guess the experiences of those at society's apex were far from typical, the fact they served at all says much about the way the ATS inverted social norms and pushed women's lives in unexpected directions.

Sadly, if inevitably, the number of ATS veterans diminishes by the year, all of which makes efforts by oral historian Dr Tessa Dunlop to collect their stories all the more important. In *The Army Girls*, she revisits some of the veterans she spoke with for her recent book of the same name.

It all makes for a rich documentary that explores, for example, how the service was initially unpopular with women because it was thought the work recruits undertook was dull. Nevertheless, there were adventures to be had as, for example, recruits served in a decimated Europe in the wake of D-Day. Less happily, many had to fend off the unwanted attention of male colleagues.

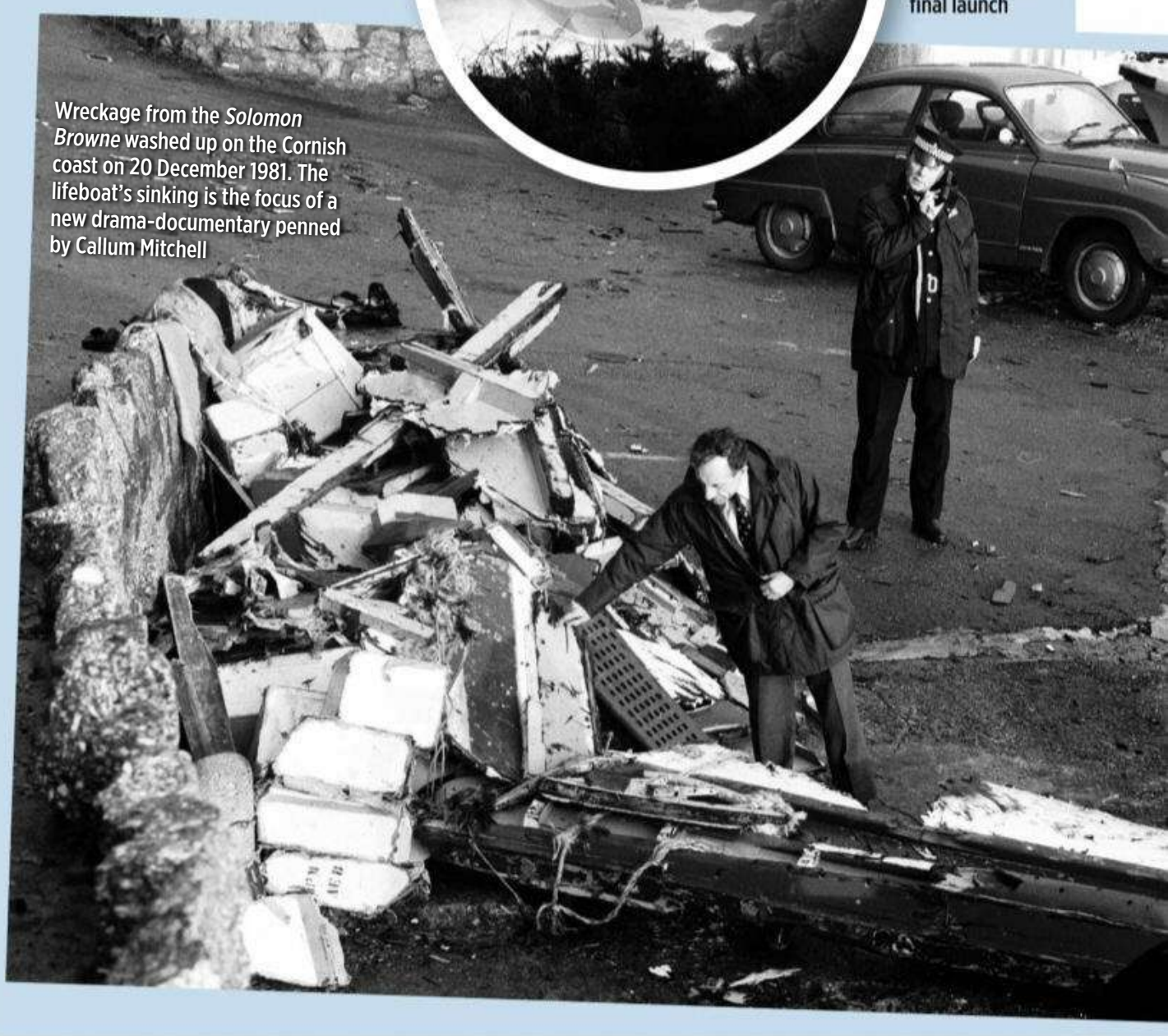
The programme's presenter, Dr Tessa Dunlop, previously explored the lives of ATS women in a book of the same name

BBC X1, GETTY IMAGES X3, PAINTING BY ROBERT W. WEIR, COURTESY ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL X1, COURTESY OF APPLE X1, ALAMY X1

The ultimate sacrifice

Solomon Browne / BBC Radio 4, Monday 20 December

A view of the capsized *Union Star* – the vessel whose distress signal prompted the *Solomon Browne*'s tragic, final launch



Wreckage from the *Solomon Browne* washed up on the Cornish coast on 20 December 1981. The lifeboat's sinking is the focus of a new drama-documentary penned by Callum Mitchell

Four decades ago, in December 1981, the coaster *Union Star* set out on its maiden voyage, tasked with transporting a cargo of fertiliser from the Netherlands to Ireland. Aboard was a five-man crew, skippered by Captain Henry Morton, and along the way the ship stopped off in Essex to pick up Morton's wife and stepdaughters so they could be together for the holidays.

But off the coast of Cornwall, *Union Star*'s engines failed, leaving the ship unable to manoeuvre as a fierce storm blew in from the Atlantic. A Sea King was sent to lift off those aboard, but the coaster was pitching so violently that its mast threatened to hit the rescue helicopter. Instead, the RNLI's *Solomon Browne* was launched from Penlee Lifeboat Station, near Mousehole. Aboard were eight volunteers, including Coxswain William Trevelyan Richards.

The men fought through the storm to reach the *Union Star* and battled to get alongside the ship. Four of those aboard the coaster made it to the lifeboat according to the *Solomon Browne*'s last message.

Tragically, nobody made it to shore. Both craft were lost and what came to be known as the Penlee Lifeboat Disaster cost 16 lives.

This poignant drama-documentary, scripted by Callum Mitchell, recalls the events through a combination of a haunting score, comms from the night and the recollections of some of the crewmen's family members.

Rebellious spirit

Dickinson / Apple TV+, new episodes streaming weekly every Friday until Christmas Eve

Dickinson, which first aired in 2019, offers a comedic take on the life of one of America's most celebrated authors

Emily Dickinson (1830–86) is now seen as one of America's greatest writers. But in her own lifetime, spent largely in her hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts, during which she published just 10 poems, she was widely regarded as an eccentric figure – a solitary spinster who found it easier to communicate via letters than in person and latterly didn't even much like leaving her own room.

In short, she probably wasn't much like the figure we see in *Dickinson*, a coming-of-age comedy-drama that plays fast and loose with the past. In a similar style to Elle Fanning's portrayal of Russian empress Catherine the Great, actor Hailee Steinfeld's Dickinson is a thoroughly modern young woman who, determined to be the greatest poet in the world, kicks against the stifling New England environs in which she finds herself.

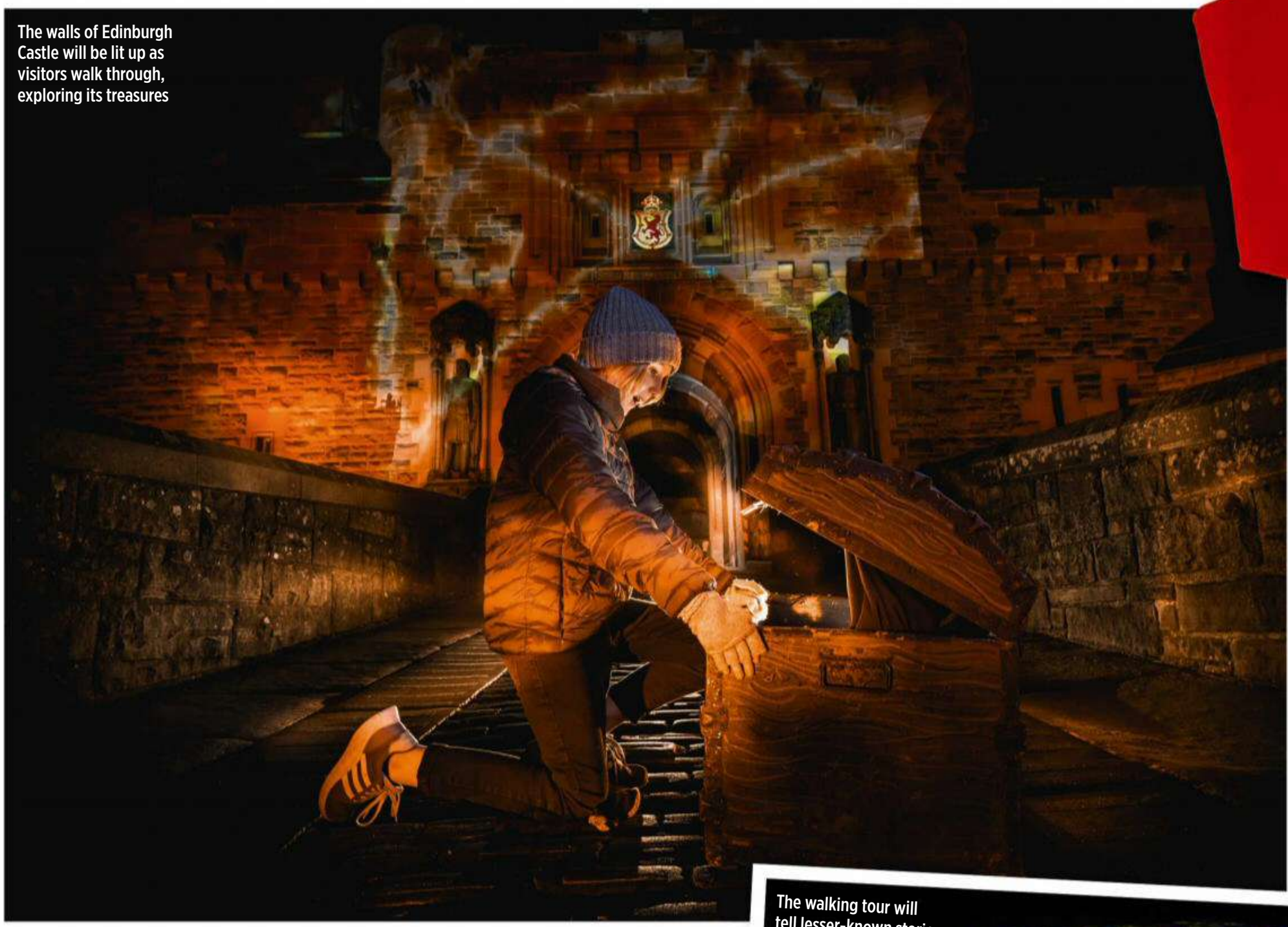
That's not to say *Dickinson* entirely ignores her actual history. She's shown, for example, as being in love with Sue Gilbert (Ella Hunt), her brother's fiancée, something for which there is certainly evidence. The third and final series of *Dickinson*, set against the backdrop of the American Civil War, covers her most productive time as an artist, and also finds Dickinson dealing with rifts in her family.

Dynastic downfall

House of Gucci / In cinemas from Friday 26 November

In 1995, a hitman murdered Maurizio Gucci, former head of the Italian luxury fashion house. His ex-wife, Patrizia Reggiani, would later be sentenced to 29 years for ordering the killing in a sensational trial that made headlines around the world.

Ridley Scott's second film of the year follows events leading up to the murder and its aftermath, and stars Lady Gaga (*pictured*) and Adam Driver as the warring couple at the centre of the story. A high-calibre cast also features Jared Leto, Jeremy Irons, Salma Hayek and Al Pacino.



The walls of Edinburgh Castle will be lit up as visitors walk through, exploring its treasures

TOUR

Castle of Light: Hidden Treasures

PAID ENTRY Edinburgh Castle, until 9 January 2022
Check dates and book tickets for a timed entry at *castleoflight.scot*

The walking tour will tell lesser-known stories from the castle's past

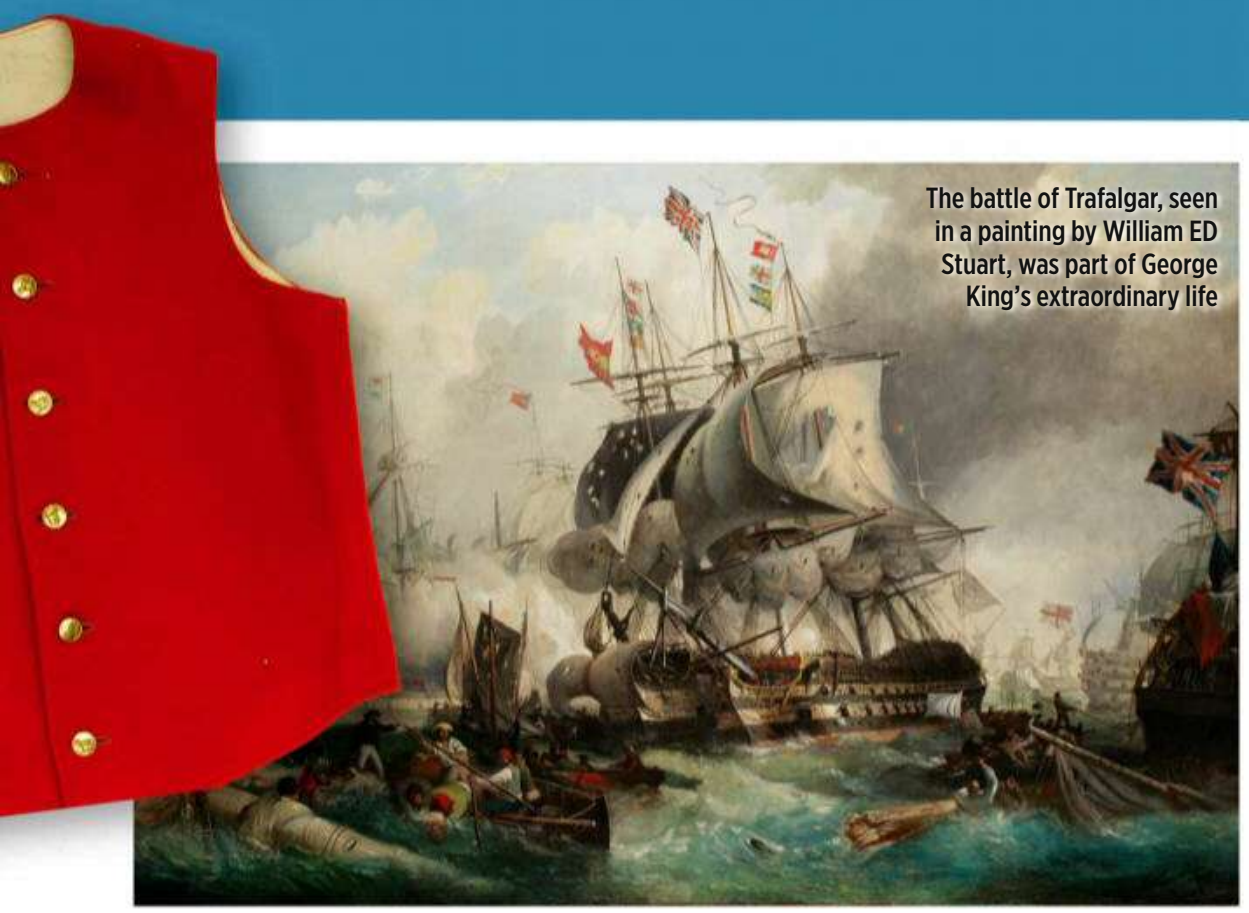
Returning to the Scottish capital is a family friendly visual spectacle that promises to light up the dark winter nights throughout December and early January 2022. State of the art lighting installations and animations will illuminate the walls of Edinburgh Castle, creating an interactive experience in which hidden treasures from the history of the famous stronghold, the so called 'defender of the nation', can be explored.

Sitting atop Castle Rock, the castle commands a watchful eye over the city. It is the most besieged place in Britain, having changed hands many times and seen its fair share of battles from the Wars of Scottish Independence in the 13th and 14th centuries through to the Jacobite Risings.

A feature of the show will be the rediscovery, in 1818, of the 'Honours of Scotland', the crown jewels used at the coronations of Scottish kings and queens. They had been hidden for one-and-a-half centuries, locked away in a chest to prevent them falling into the hands of Oliver Cromwell's army, and melted down. It was with the help of Walter Scott, a giant of Scottish literature, that they were found, and they have been on display ever since.

Anyone who went to Castle of Light in 2019 will remember Rex the Lion, who will make a return to guide visitors through the stories of 2021's after-dark light spectacular. Tickets must be booked in advance for a specific time slot.

NICK MAILER X2, CORAM IN THE CARE OF THE FOUNDLING MUSEUM X2, THE NATIONAL GALLERY LONDON, CHRIS PAYNE



The battle of Trafalgar, seen in a painting by William ED Stuart, was part of George King's extraordinary life

EXHIBITION

Fighting Talk: One Boy's Journey from Abandonment to Trafalgar

PAID ENTRY Foundling Museum, London, until 27 February 2022, *foundlingmuseum.org.uk*

Through the autobiography of a man you are unlikely to have heard of, George King, a new exhibition will explore 18th century society, warfare and life, from the origins of Britain's first children's charity, the Foundling Hospital, to the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. George was foundling number 18,053 at the hospital, a home for orphaned, abandoned or vulnerable children (one of the foundling's waistcoasts can be seen above). Learning to read and write, he became an apprentice, but ran away and, in 1804, was press ganged into the Royal Navy. His voyages took him around the world and into battle at Horatio Nelson's great victory. George's memoirs offer an enthralling eyewitness account of the toils of life at sea, as well as war. The exhibition features original pages of the manuscript, naval medals, letters annotated by Nelson, and a fragment of the flag from the revered admiral's coffin.

EXHIBITION

Hogarth and Europe

PAID ENTRY Tate Britain, London, until 20 March 2022, *tate.org.uk*

William Hogarth was an 18th-century English artist and satirist known for his social commentary and tackling of moral issues, such as alcoholism, prostitution and cruelty. Society in Europe was going through a dramatic shift and Hogarth was there to capture it all – from innovation and revolution to injustice and exploitation. For the first time, some of Hogarth's greatest works will be displayed alongside his European contemporaries. These include Chardin from Paris, Francesco Guardi from Venice, and Amsterdam's Cornelis Troost. Together, these artworks will highlight the parallels that European society shared during the 18th century.

William Hogarth's *The Tête à Tête* (1743) from the series *Marriage A-la-Mode*, depicting the results of an ill-suited union

SHOW

Lord Foppletwig's Christmas Contraption Show

PAID ENTRY Thackray Museum of Medicine, Leeds, 11–19 December, *thackraymuseum.co.uk*

If you enjoy getting to know what a Victorian Christmas was like, but a more chaotic and silly version than you'll get with Dickens, then the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds wants to introduce you to Lord Foppletwig. In this festive slapstick show, the eponymous street peddler and his two long suffering servants Messrs Douglas and Gacko will be regaling audiences with stories, songs and stunts, while attempting to prove that his unusual inventions actually work. It promises to be a far from typical Christmas show.

After a £4 million refurbishment, the award winning Thackray Museum of Medicine is teeming with artefacts, galleries and experiences about the fascinating, and often gruesome, history of medicine and healthcare. Highlights include Adolf Hitler's blood transfusion kit and Prince Albert's medicine chest.

Lord Foppletwig will be your guide to slapstick festive fun – Victorian-style

EVENT

Palace of Stardust

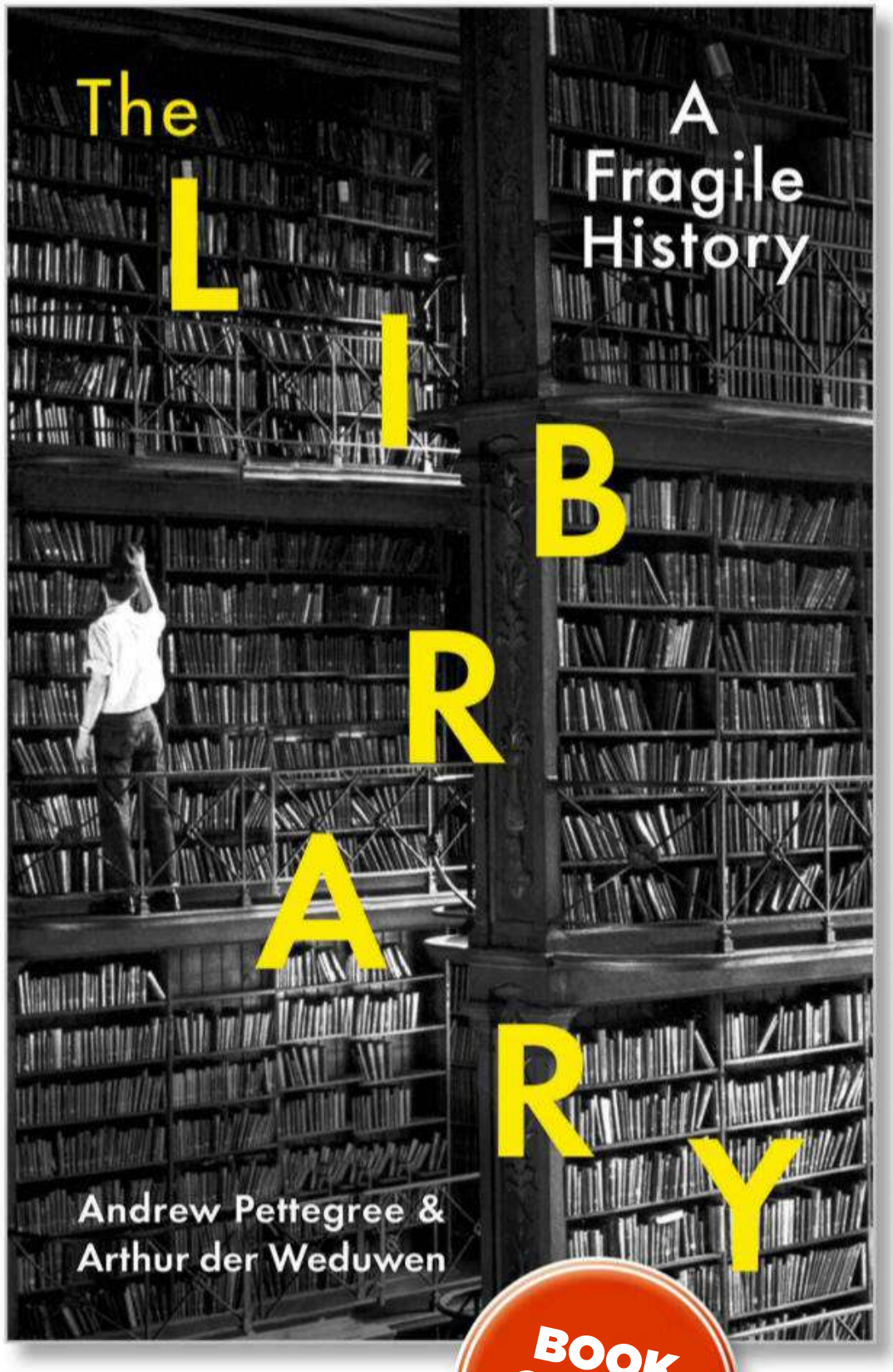
PAID ENTRY Hampton Court Palace, London, 8 December to 3 January 2022, *hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace*

In the centre of Hampton Court Palace is an astronomical clock made for Henry VIII and installed on the gatehouse. As well as telling the time, it shows the phases of the Moon, the signs of the zodiac, and the movement of the Sun. This is the beating heart of the palace and has inspired a magnificent Christmas light trail. Visitors will be able to walk around the cobbled courtyards and gardens, taking in illuminations, lanterns and light projections of the planets, moons, clocks and sundials all over the Tudor palace. To really get into a festive mood, Hampton Court will also be home to an ice rink, open daily, until 9 January 2022.

The Solar System will come to Hampton Court Palace this winter

BOOKS & PODCASTS

THIS MONTH'S BEST HISTORICAL READS AND LISTENS



The Library: A Fragile History

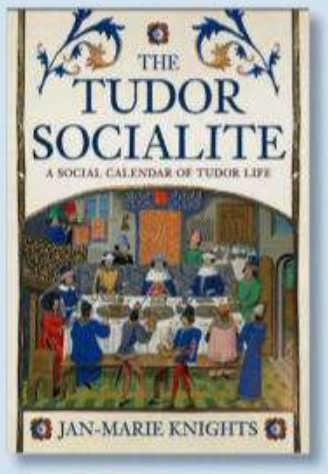
By Andrew Pettegree and Arthur der Weduwen
Profile Books, £25, hardback, 528 pages

Libraries have had a long and varied history, taking in both the elite repositories first created in ancient Mesopotamia and Greece and the public institutions that emerged in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. This globetrotting book charts their stories and profiles the key figures who preserved knowledge for future generations, including scholars, churchmen and librarians. It also considers the challenges that libraries have faced across the past century, from changing technologies and political agendas to the spectres of warfare and pandemic.

The Tudor Socialite: A Social Calendar of Tudor Life

By Jan-Marie Knights
Amberley Publishing, £20, hardback, 288 pages

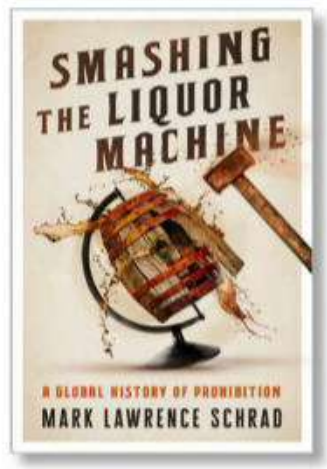
Not, as you might expect, an account of the customs and holidays of your average 16th century person, this is instead a chronological tour through the engagements of members of Tudor high society. Spanning a century and interwoven with cameos from royal figures, it also chronicles the pastimes enjoyed by those who existed within their orbit: fireworks and feasts, tournaments and trips. Yet life could still be hard, even within this rarefied world, and the ripples created by personal tragedy and political instability are fascinating.



Smashing the Liquor Machine

By Mark Lawrence Schrad
Oxford University Press, £25, hardback, 736 pages

The term 'Prohibition' immediately brings to mind the speakeasies and moonshine of the United States during the 1920s but, as this new book stresses, the US was far from alone in banning alcohol. Travelling from eastern Europe to south Asia, Mark Lawrence Schrad instead puts the era's temperance movement into the context of wider political and social agendas around the globe. It's sometimes a little academic in tone, but this is a vivid exploration of how interconnected the world was even a century ago.



National Treasures: Saving the Nation's Art in World War II

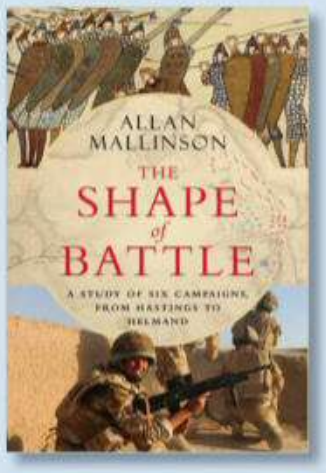
By Caroline Shenton
John Murray, £16.99, hardback, 336 pages

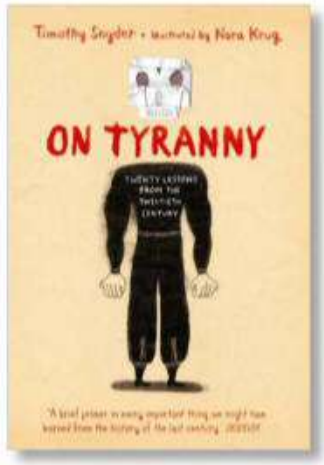
As war became an increasingly likely prospect in the summer of 1939, thoughts turned to how best to protect some of Britain's most treasured assets: the contents of its museums and galleries. Over the coming months, a band of officials, curators and archivists set out to ensure the safety of these artefacts, turning to unlikely resources and strategies in the process. Both a retelling of this extraordinary historical moment and a celebration of British eccentricity, this is richly drawn, uplifting stuff.

The Shape of Battle: A Study of Six Campaigns, from Hastings to Helmand

By Allan Mallinson
Bantam Press, £25, hardback, 416 pages

What factors govern the outcome of a military encounter? That's the question at the heart of this history of six major conflagrations, including the battle of Hastings in 1066, the 1815 clash at Waterloo and the Normandy landings of June 1944. As author and retired professional soldier Allan Mallinson puts it, war is the most complex human interaction ever known – and he's a fascinating and knowledgeable guide to the wider context and turning points of these key battles.





On Tyranny, Graphic Edition: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century

By Timothy Snyder and Nora Krug
The Bodley Head, £16.99, hardback, 128 pages

Timothy Snyder has frequently written about authoritarianism, and his 2017 book *On Tyranny* considered how understanding its history could help explain today's politics. This new graphic-novel adaptation sees Snyder team up with illustrator Nora Krug to offer an accessible guide to the past century's most extreme regimes. It's framed as a series of lessons, and its present-day political focus won't be for everyone, but this is an intriguing take on the link between history and current affairs.

PODCAST WHAT TO LISTEN TO...

Each month we bring you three of our favourite podcasts from the BBC and HistoryExtra

Aberfan: Tip Number 7

bit.ly/AberfanPod102

The lives of a Welsh mining community were changed forever when, on 21 October 1966, a coal tip collapsed and sent slurry cascading into the neighbouring village of Aberfan. More than a hundred children, and 28 adults, died. This emotional series tells the story through first-hand testimony, contemporary reporting and historical context.

Kyle Harper: Plagues Upon the Earth

bit.ly/PlaguePod102

More than 18 months on, the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact our lives. In this podcast episode first broadcast in October, classicist Kyle Harper looks back at the ways in which infectious disease also shaped the stories of our forebears, and traces its connections to wider social forces including wealth, travel and trade.

You're Dead to Me: Owain Glyndŵr

bit.ly/OwainPod102

Although his name may not be familiar to all, 15th-century rebel Owain Glyndŵr is one of the most important figures in Welsh history. This instalment of podcast series *You're Dead to Me* sees Greg Jenner team up with historian Kathryn Hurlock and comedian Elis James to tell Glyndŵr's story, and examine his fascinating legacy today.

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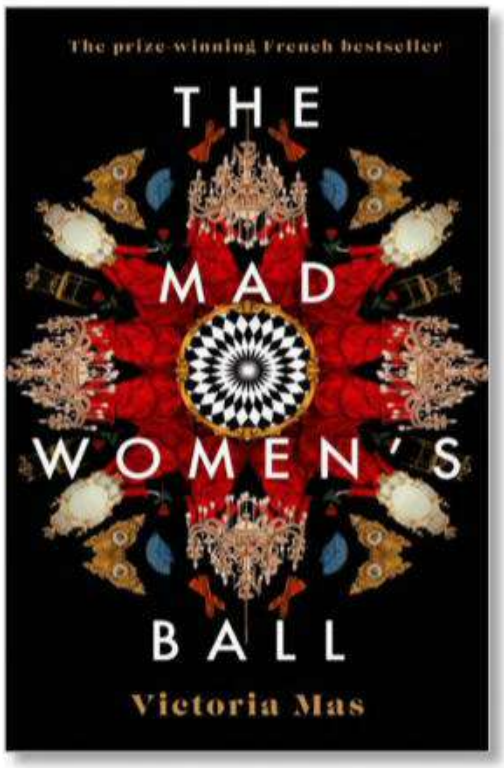
HISTORICAL FICTION...



The Mad Women's Ball

By Victoria Mas (translated by Frank Wynne)
Doubleday, £14.99, hardback, 224 pages

In late 19th century Paris, women deemed to be mad, hysterical, or simply outcast from society are sent to the Salpêtrière asylum under the care of Dr Jean Martin Charcot. The neurologist has wowed much of the city with his hypnotism demonstrations on the unfortunate women, and each year, a ball is held for the benefit of the local elite, where they can dance with the patients for their own amusement. Nurse Geneviève fully believes in Charcot's methods that is until she meets the young Eugénie, who needs her help...

Excerpt

This passage of the book follows Eugénie – the fiery, passionate daughter of a bourgeois family – and the moment that her loved ones betray her

Had Eugénie roused herself for a moment from her revérie, she would have noticed the brooding atmosphere that had reigned in the confined space ever since they set out. She would have noticed her brother's gloomy expression, her father's stiff demeanour, and she would have wondered why a day trip out of the city should create such tension.

Only when the carriage stops suddenly does Eugénie emerge from her torpor. Turning around, she sees an unfamiliar expression on the faces of her father and her brother, a mixture of gravity and concern. Before she has time to say a word, her father's voice booms:

'Let's get out here.'

Unsettled, Eugénie steps down, followed by her brother. Standing on the pavement, she looks up at the imposing building outside which they have stopped. The vaulted archway is flanked by two stone columns whose lintels are carved with the words: 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité'. Above the keystone, in black block capitals on pale stone she reads: 'Hôpital de la Salpêtrière'. Through the arch, at the far end of a paved walkway, an even more monumental edifice surmounted by a dome of solemn black seems to take up all the surrounding space. Eugénie's heart leaps into her throat...

ASTRID DI CROLLALANZA

Q&A
Victoria Mas

The Mad Women's Ball is Victoria Mas' debut novel. First published in 2019, the book has won numerous accolades in France and has been adapted into a film released by Amazon Prime Video. Prior to becoming an author, Victoria studied at the Sorbonne and worked in film in the US.

How did you first come across the real-life inspiration for your novel?
The Mad Women's Ball takes place in Paris in 1885, at the Salpêtrière Hospital, which was then a women's prison and asylum, and is today one of Paris' major hospitals. I happened to go to the Salpêtrière three years ago, and I was struck by the place. It exuded an air of mystery that I found compelling. Out of curiosity, I began to look into the hospital's history, and I learned about the infamous 'Mad Women's Balls' that took place there in the 19th century. Each year, those confined at the hospital would select eccentric costumes to wear, and Paris' elite would come along for the experience of dancing next to women they thought of as 'mad'.

Why did you choose to focus on the patients?
Although much has been written about the hospital's head of neurology, Dr Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–93), very little has been said about the women who enabled him to pursue his research on hypnotism and hysteria. During my research, I wanted to know who the women were, and why it was deemed acceptable to confine them – sometimes for very trivial reasons. Overall, I felt a profound sense of empathy for these forgotten figures, and somehow, I identified with them.

Which patient's story struck you most?
Cabaret dancer Jane Avril, who I mention in the book, spent two years at the Salpêtrière as a teenager. She was saved by some prostitutes from jumping off a bridge and subsequently brought to the hospital – a story that sounds like it came straight out of an Émile Zola novel! Surprisingly, Jane Avril had fond memories of her stay: it was in the Salpêtrière that she discovered her passion for dancing and found a way to express herself. For me, her story – and her attitude towards the Salpêtrière – was fundamental in understanding what a complex environment this was: for some women it was a place where they could find solace and release.

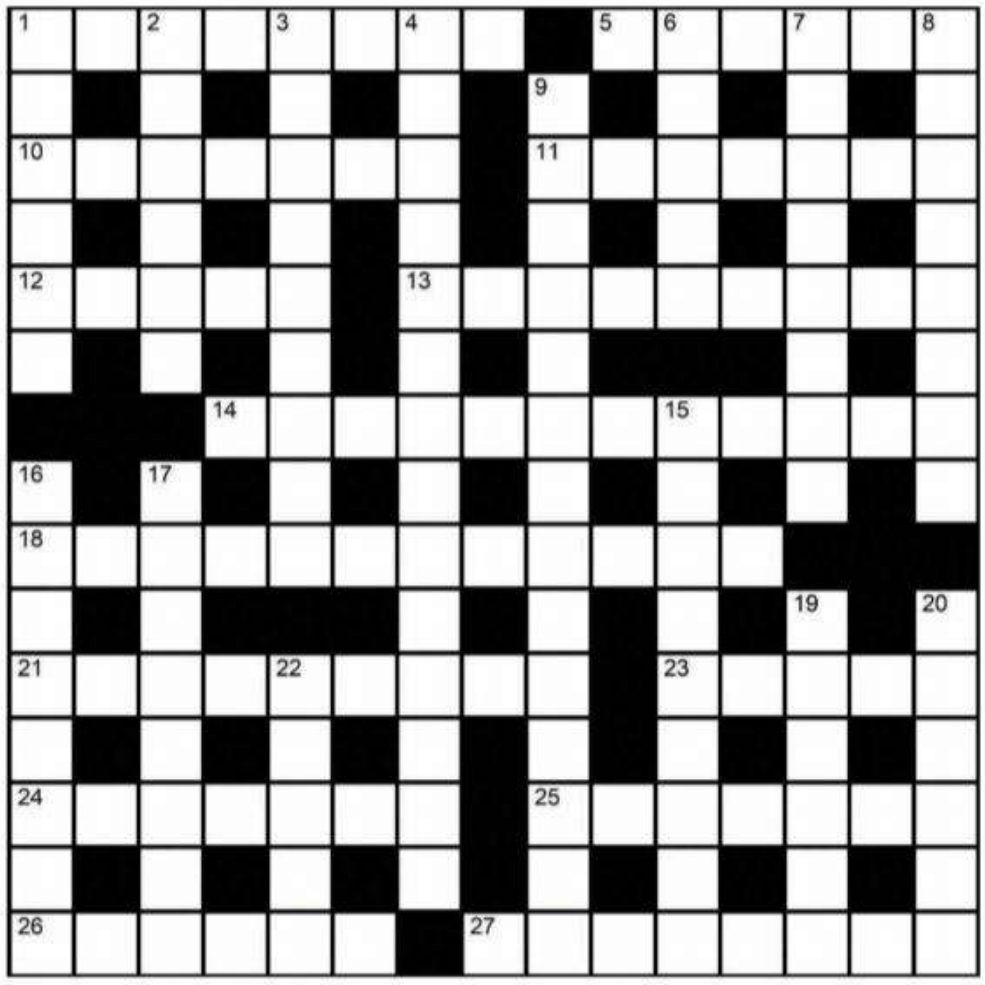
Are there any other people from history you would like to write about?
I find the life of Hildegard von Bingen [Benedictine abbess and polymath, who was later made a saint] very interesting, as well as the story of Joan of Arc, although so much has already been written about her. In fact, my next book is inspired by an important historical figure, but I can't say much more yet!

CROSSWORD

TEST YOURSELF WITH OUR HISTORICAL PUZZLE EVERY ISSUE

CROSSWORD No. 102

Test your history knowledge to solve our prize puzzle – and you could win a fantastic new book



Set by Richard Smyth

ACROSS

1 US folk and protest singer (b1941) (4,4)
5/14 Term for a period of unrest in the UK in 1978–79 (6,2,10)
10 Cratchit boy in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) (4,3)
11 ___ Experiment, notorious psychological test carried out at Yale in the 1960s (7)
12 Major river, formerly the border between Gaul and Germania (5)
13 City in Bavaria, noted for the trials of Nazi war criminals (9)
14 See 5
18 'The ___', name sometimes given to Australia (5,7)
21 1924 Foreign Legion novel by PC Wren (4,5)
23 Robert ___ (1635–1703), scientist, microscopist and architect (5)
24 *La* ___, slave ship seized by Mende captives in July 1839 (7)
25 Imaginary ideal lands, such as Arcadia and Cockaigne (7)
26 German name for the historic port of Gdansk (6)
27 Transatlantic golf tournament first played in 1927 (5,3)

DOWN

1 ___ Tull (1674–1741), farming pioneer (6)
2 Epic work by Virgil (6)
3 *Madama* ___, 1904 opera by Giacomo Puccini (9)
4 King of the English, briefly, in 1016 (6,8)
6 Religion founded in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century (5)
7 Ivan ___ (1818–83), Russian novelist (8)
8 Historic Kent seaside town (8)
9 1931 Edna Ferber novel; also the name of a 1999 film directed by Sam Mendes (8,6)
15 Location reputedly reached by the explorer Robert Peary in 1909 (5,4)
16 Term for the district of St James's in Westminster (8)
17 The first Roman emperor, also known by the name Caesar Augustus (8)
19 'The ___ Killer', nickname of a serial murderer active in California in the 1960s (6)
20 William ___ (1745–1814), English civil engineer (6)
22 John ___ (1940–2002), head of the Gambino crime family (5)

CHANCE TO WIN

BOOK WORTH £25 FOR THREE WINNERS

Great Cities: The Stories Behind the World's Most Fascinating Places
Published by DK

HOW TO ENTER

Post entries to **BBC History Revealed, Christmas 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA** or email them to **christmas2021@historyrevealedcomps.co.uk** by noon on **1 January 2022**.

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SOLUTION Nº 100

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LETTERS

The fate of the Princes in the Tower continues to mystify, but did our piece on them read like Tudor propaganda?

10 QUOTATIONS
BBC
HISTORY REVEALED
100th issue
YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO THE
WARS OF THE ROSES
The medieval clash that tore England apart and launched the Tudor dynasty
PLUS World War I mantlepieces In a nutshell: ancient pyramids

The sinister version of Richard III seen in William Shakespeare's play is nothing like the truth, says reader Bridget Gunston

IN SUPPORT OF RICHARD

As a committed Ricardian attempting to restore the reputation of Richard III, I read your Essential Guide to the Wars of the Roses (November 2021) with increasing dismay. The writers you chose to give their views on Richard's accession and reign are all, without exception, Lancastrian in their views relying on the time worn Tudor propaganda, including Shakespeare's fictional portrait of this much maligned king.

In Nige Tassell's piece, The Princes in the Tower, he insinuates that Richard had his eye on the throne before his brother Clarence was executed! Richard had no way of knowing at this time that his brother Edward IV would die so soon, and no way of knowing the king's sons would not be eligible to succeed him. Another piece (Fraternal Friction), talks of Richard's "cravings for enhanced power" and uses phrases like "make his move", all suggesting a personal view of premeditation on the part of Richard.

In Lauren Johnson's interview, she states that he was also worse than many [nobles of the day] and that it was "extremely likely that the Princes in the Tower were killed on Richard's orders".

Richard was a loyal family man, and deeply religious. He would never have done anything to harm his nephews. He was planning Edward V's coronation, which he was forced to reorganise after the queen [Elizabeth Woodville] had tried to crown her son in haste in order to rule through him. The illegitimacy of her children by Edward only came to light after Bishop Robert Stillington revealed Edward IV's previous marriage contract a fact that Edward and his queen had been at pains to conceal. Richard had no choice but to assume the throne.

A child could not rule; Richard was the next in line by blood and was asked by Parliament to assume the role.

Bridget Gunston, by email

Lauren Johnson, the expert advisor for our Essential Guide to the Wars of the Roses, replies:

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of this period of history is the complexity and ambiguity of those involved, such as Henry VI, the likeable monarch with an admirable drive for peace, whose ineptitude made two nations bleed. Or Margaret of Anjou, revered and maligned in equal measure, the source of extraordinary loyalty for some, and capable of duplicity and political cunning to rival any of her contemporaries. Richard III is only one of these fascinating contradictions, and it is his complexity that makes him intriguing – and endlessly debatable.

He was pious, militarily impressive and inspired loyalty from his retainers, yet he failed to win the hearts and minds of his subjects more broadly. (How else to interpret the two rebellions he faced in less than two years? One of which was in support of a man who had no real claim to the throne?)

I do not read this era through the prism of later Tudor commentators, and especially Shakespeare, who has distorted so much of our collective understanding. Instead, I approach the era on its own terms – critically, using contemporary sources. It is clear from these that Yorkist and Ricardian propaganda was as potent, in its time, as Tudor propaganda became. I also consider individuals in the context of their peers, not as tragic creations (as both Shakespeare and Thomas More's Richards were).

I believe it is more valuable to contextualise history in this way than to take sides on single individuals. Richard was capable of cruelty and cupidity, depriving more than one wealthy widow of her property – on one occasion, allegedly, with threats of force. He is far from alone in this, as his siblings and rivals mistreated those out of political favour for their own mercenary ends, too. We shouldn't try to read Richard as a saint any more than we should interpret him as a villain.

ARRRR YOU SURE?

In your Essential Guide to the Golden Age of Piracy (December 2021), Dr Rebecca Simon maintains that real-life pirates did not make

The crew of a Dutch ship were made to walk the plank in 1829, says reader Ian MacDonald

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X1

victims walk the plank. While there is no record of this happening during the so-called 'golden age' [the late 17th and early 18th centuries] – when victims of skirmishes would be abandoned on looted ships, left behind on remote islands or keelhauled – there is certainly evidence that pirates carried out this method of execution in later years.

In April 1829, the Dutch ship *Vhan Fredericka* was attacked and looted near the Virgin Islands by about 30 pirates. The Dutch crew were bound, blindfolded and had cannonballs attached to their feet before being made to walk the plank. One person was put ashore after cooperating with the pirates. While incidents such as this were fortunately not an everyday feature of life at sea, neither were they totally fictional.
Ian MacDonald, Essex

CROSSWORD WINNERS

The three lucky winners of the crossword from issue 99 are:

K Houghton, Isle of Man
J Sandiford, Berkshire
E Timney, North Tyneside

Congratulations! You've each won a copy of *River Kings* by Cat Jarman.

Please note, due to Covid-19, we will be unable to post your prize until we are working in the office once more. Please bear with us!

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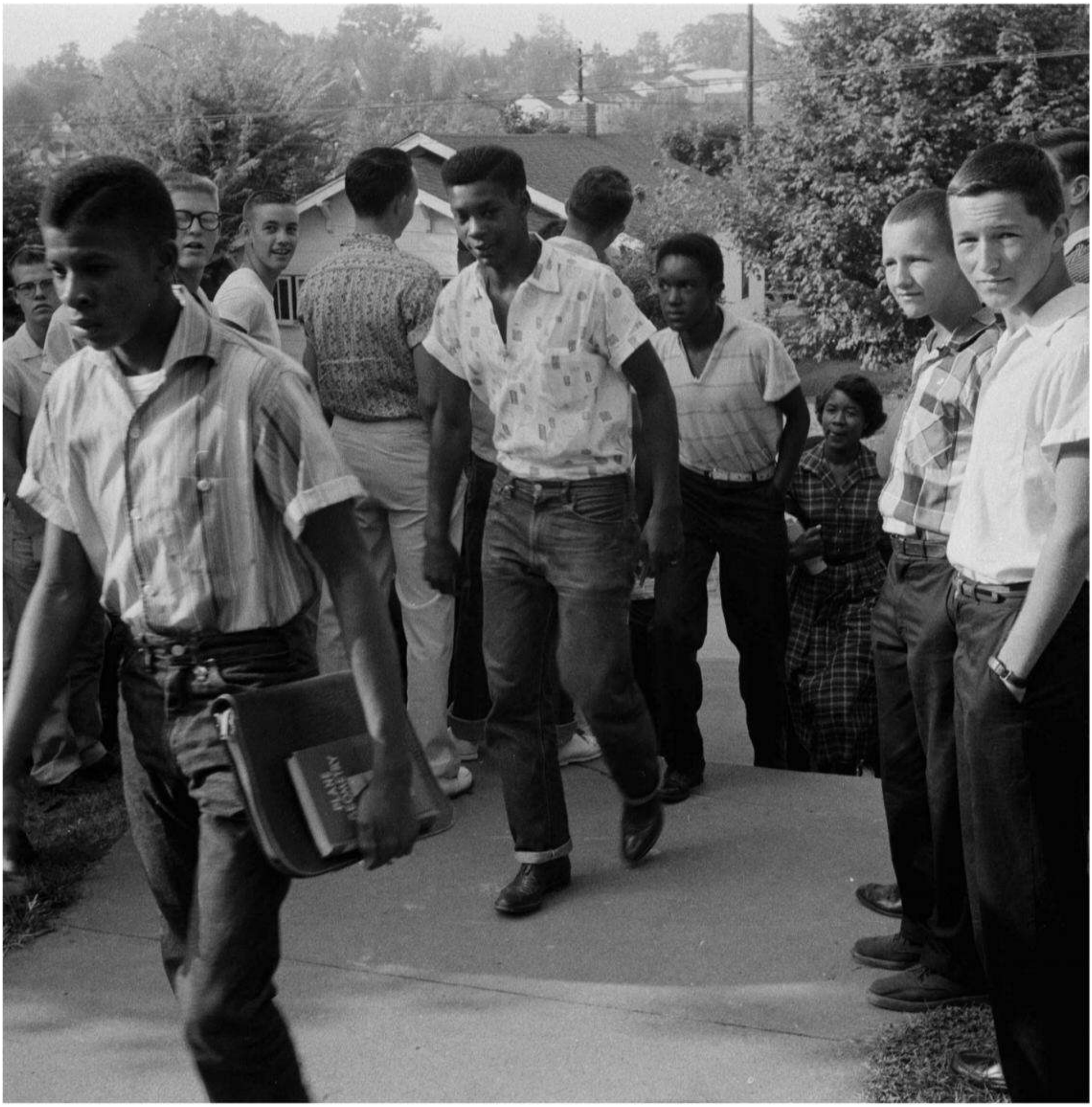

THE ‘CLINTON 12’ GO TO SCHOOL 1956

As white students line the entrance to Clinton High School in Tennessee, a group of 12 African-American boys and girls show remarkable courage as figureheads of integration. The landmark US Supreme Court ruling, *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) had declared racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional, but many Americans found this a hard decision to accept. When Clinton was court-ordered to desegregate for its 1956–57 academic year, the enrolment of the so-called ‘Clinton 12’ was met with protests and rising racial tensions, and the students faced harassment and the threat of violence. But Bobby Cain (*left*) persevered and became the first black graduate from a desegregated Tennessee school.

GETTY IMAGES

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